DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 473 737 EC 309 419

AUTHOR	Obiakor, Festus E., Ed.; Utley, Cheryl A., Ed.
TITLE	Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 2002.
INSTITUTION	Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, VA. Div. for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners.
ISBN	ISBN-0-86586-965-0
PUB DATE	2002-08-00
NOTE	107p.; Published annually.
AVAILABLE FROM	Council for Exceptional Children, Div. for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 1110 N. Glebe Rd., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201 (Stock No. D5514, CEC Members $11.20, Non-Members $16). Tel: 888-232-7733 (Toll Free); Fax: 703-264-9494; e-mail: service@cec.sped.org; Web site: http://www.cec.sped.org.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Multiple Voices; v5 n1 Aug 2002
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	American Indians; Augmentative and Alternative Communication; Bilingual Education; Blacks; *Disabilities; Disability Identification; Diversity (Student); Educational Change; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Learning Disabilities; Limited English Speaking; *Minority Group Children; Multicultural Education; *Parent Participation; Performance Factors; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Reading Strategies; Research Problems; Student Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This issue of "Multiple Voices" contains the following articles: (1) "A Self-Study of Diversity: Preservice Teachers' Beliefs Revealed through Classroom Practices" (Donna M. Sobel and others), which presents the results of seven preservice teachers' self-study that reveals ways in which the teachers' beliefs regarding diversity issues were realized in their classroom interactions, practices, and observations; (2) "African American Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Special Education Programs" (Courtney Davis and others), which examines the empirical literature on parental involvement and finds insufficient reporting of sample selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures; (3) "Effects of Failure Free Reading on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with Learning Disabilities" (Grace England and others), which presents findings that indicate using the Failure Free Reading Program improved letter and word identification, word attack skills, and reading comprehension; (4) "Native Americans and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Issues" (Sheela Stuart and Howard P. Parette, Jr.); (5) "The Effects of Multicultural and Bilingual Training on Preservice Teachers' Self-Reported Level of Competence" (Arletha McSwain), which presents findings that indicate participants who received in-class experiences perceived their level of competency to be higher; (6) "Factors Affecting Special Education Services for English Language Learners with Suspected Language Learning Disabilities" (Henriette W. Langdon), which presents a case study of an English language learner who was diagnosed with a language learning

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disability; and (7) "Educational Reform and Accountability: Implications for African Americans with Exceptionalities" (Festus E. Obiakor and Bridgie A. Ford). (Papers include references.) (CR)

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Multiple Voices: For Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners

Edited By
Festus E. Obiakor
Cheryl A. Utley

Volume 5, Number 1/August 2002

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MULTIPLE VOICES

FOR ETHNICALLY DIVERSE EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

August 2002

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

FESTUS E. OBIAKOR
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

CHERYL A. UTLEY
Juniper Gardens Children's Project
University of Kansas

EDITORS

DDEL

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ISBN: 0-86586-965-0

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Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1, August 2002

PREVIEW v
Festus E. Obiakor and Cheryl A. Utley (Co-editors)

FINAL REMARKS vii
Bridgie A. Ford

A Self-Study of Diversity: Preservice Teachers' Beliefs Revealed Through Classroom Practices 1
Donna M. Sobel, Sheryl V. Taylor, Shannon M. Kalisher, and Rachel A. Weddle-Steinberg

African American Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Special Education Programs 13
Courtney Davis, Barry Brown, Jean-Marie Bantz, and Carla Manno

Effects of Failure Free Reading on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with Learning Disabilities 28
Grace England, Sara Collins, and Bob Algozzine

Native Americans and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Issues 38
Sheela Stuart and Howard P. Parette, Jr.

The Effects of Multicultural and Bilingual Training on Preservice Students' Self-Reported Level of Competency 54
Arletha McSwain

Factors Affecting Special Education Services for English Language Learners with Suspected Language Learning Disabilities 66
Henriette W. Langdon

Educational Reform and Accountability: Implications for African Americans with Exceptionalities 83
Festus E. Obiakor and Bridgie A. Ford

PREVIEW

FESTUS E. OBIAKOR AND CHERYL A. UTLEY
CO-EDITORS, *Multiple Voices*

We feel honored to serve as the new co-editors of *Multiple Voices*, a refereed journal that has impacted general and special education. We understand the challenges we face. However, in honor of this service, we intend to (a) continue the mission of *Multiple Voices* as the journal of the Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (DDEL), the Council for Exceptional Children, (b) increase the exposure of different voices that have been traditionally silent, (c) advance scholarship and research that target culturally and linguistically diverse learners with exceptionalities, and (d) work collaboratively and consultatively with seasoned scholars to mentor potential scholars.

We believe strongly that we have great stories to tell and no one can tell them better than us. We understand the benefits of oral tradition, especially in enhancing cultural continuity. But, in honor of scholarship, we also understand that stories become contaminated when they go from person to person. To avoid such a contamination, they ought to be documented in written format. *Multiple Voices* has been excellent in documenting untold stories in the form of articles targeted to a wide audience. This will continue to be our legacy. It is in this spirit that we urge the DDEL membership and the Council for Exceptional Children general membership to develop renewed pride in this journal. It has been proven to be a journal that makes a special kind of difference—the positive difference that honors service. We are energized by the positive responses that we have received nationally and internationally. More important, we are pleased that renowned scholars and educators have decided to join our team as associate editors, editorial board members, and guest reviewers. As the list reveals, these individuals bring with them tremendous talents and energies.

Many critical issues confront us today. Scholars, educators, parents, community leaders, and state and federal agencies are beginning to ask important questions: Why do we have disproportionate representations of culturally and linguistically diverse learners in special and gifted education programs? Why do we use tests that lack validity and reliability to assess, categorize, and place students? Do school accountability and reform indicate exclusion of students from educational programming? What model programs can help students to maximize their fullest potential? How can we recruit and retain ethnically diverse teachers and professionals from preschool to university levels? We are convinced that *Multiple Voices* is an important outlet for responding to these questions through research and scholarship.

In this issue of *Multiple Voices*, Sobel, Taylor, and Kalisher present the results of seven preservice teachers' self-study; Davis Brown, Bantz, and Manno examine the empirical literature on the involvement of parents of African American students with special needs; England, Collins, and Algozzine explain the effects of failure-free reading on culturally and linguistically diverse students with learning disabilities; Stuart and Parette discuss Native Americans and augmentative and alternative communication issues; McSwain exposes the effects of multicultural and bilingual training on preservice teachers' self-reported level of competency; Langdon discusses factors to consider in providing special education services to English-language learners with suspected language-learning disabilities; and Obiakor and Ford analyze implications of school reform on African American learners with exceptionalities.

We are starting a new exciting era as co-editors of *Multiple Voices*. We thank Dr. Bridgie Alexis Ford for setting the stage as the first editor of this

fine journal. In April 2002, during the general meeting of DDEL in New York, she gave a farewell address that could have been her last Preview for this journal. To honor her, we are presenting the full text of her address on the following pages to give readers some context for where we have been, where we are, and where we intend to go.

FINAL REMARKS

BRIDGIE ALEXIS FORD

Together, we are making a difference! These words are the ending statement in my editorial remarks in the first issue of *Multiple Voices* in 1995. As I pass the editorship, for which my tenure ended at the CEC convention 2001, to the two new editors (Dr. Festus Obiakor and Dr. Cheryl Utley), I want to take the opportunity to briefly articulate our journey thus far. Through the collective talent and energy of all involved with the production of *Multiple Voices*, we have continued to make a difference! Task-orientation and quality encompass all aspects of *Multiple Voices*, including (a) its purpose, (b) its name, (c) its scholarly content (d) its innovative format, (e) its editorial board and reviewers, and (f) its relevant covers.

The name *Multiple Voices (MV)* was deliberately selected because of its congruency with the overall purpose and goal, that is, the production of a refereed publication that presents "a broad spectrum of scholarly articles pertaining to the varied topics and issues impacting appropriate educational services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners." The format of MV has reflected and continues to reflect the concept of the "whole village." The "In the Oral Tradition" interview format has provided a forum for our knowledgeable elders to delineate and combat inhibitory paradigms, research, and professional practices with frameworks for optimal outcomes for CLD youths and their families. Concomitantly, the content of MV has highlighted scholarly work by researchers or practitioners about legislation and institutional policies, educational model and reform movements, assessment, curriculum content, and instructional practices pertaining to CLD youth with exceptionalities. *Commitment* and *excellence* are only two of the words that accurately described the associate editors. Their high-quality reviewing of manuscripts and formal mentoring activities were constant. The thorough and timely review of manuscripts by the reviewers of *MV* was also a critical contribution to the journal's success. Their initial review determined the value of the manuscripts' content to individuals with exceptionalities from CLD backgrounds and the educational field.

Collectively, we have accomplished much, but we still have much work ahead of us. Some of you may be familiar with the story of four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody:

> An important job needed to be done. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did. Somebody became angry because it was Everybody's job and Everybody thought that Anybody could do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done!

I share this story to point out that each of us must continue to contribute our professional knowledge and skills to effect positive educational and life outcomes for children and youths from CLD backgrounds. Despite federal mandates and recent school reform movements, too many youths from CLD backgrounds remain in crisis situations in our nation's schools. It is essential that our scholarly and varied voices define the appropriate professional policies and practices. I thank DDEL for the opportunity to serve as the first editor of *Multiple Voices*. Let us join together to make a significant difference in the lives of CLD youths with exceptionalities! According to the ancient Chinese proverb, *Only when all contribute their firewood can they build up a strong fire.*

MULTIPLE VOICES MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES

- Manuscripts may focus on one or more areas: effective classroom or postsecondary practices, assessment, family or community empowerment techniques, research, material or test reviews, recruitment, and other issues pertaining to culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional populations.
- Manuscripts should be on 8½ x 11 paper and must conform to APA style (5th ed.) and not exceed 20 pages (including references).
- Authors should submit four copies of their manuscript to the co-editor of *Multiple Voices,* Cheryl A. Utley, Ph.D. One copy of the manuscript must include a title page that contains the manuscript's title, each author's name and professional title, telephone numbers, fax numbers, and institutional affiliation. E-mail addresses should be included if possible. In order to facilitate a blind review, the first page of the manuscript's text for three of the four copies should include only the manuscript's title (no author names).
- Receipt of manuscript will be acknowledged and manuscript will undergo a blind peer review.
- Only manuscripts not previously published and not being considered for publication may be submitted.
- DDEL's policy on the use of copyrighted material is strict. Please obtain official permission from appropriate sources and include it along with the submitted manuscript.
- All manuscripts should include a three-line biographical sketch of each author.
- If accepted for publication, authors will submit two hard copies and one disk copy to the co-editor.

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Teachers are especially encouraged to submit work about proven practices for students with disabilities and/or those with gifts and talents.

MULTIPLE VOICES
FOR ETHNICALLY DIVERSE EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS
2002

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A SELF-STUDY OF DIVERSITY: PRESERVICE TEACHERS' BELIEFS REVEALED THROUGH CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The authors present the results of a self-study by seven preservice teachers that reveals ways in which the teachers' beliefs regarding diversity issues were realized in their classroom interactions, practices, and observations. This investigation was set within the context of a cohort of postbaccalaureate preservice teachers in an initial teacher education program that is built around the goal of preparing reflective teachers. It provided the framework for preservice teachers to raise their level of awareness regarding issues of diversity. The identification of common themes in the participants' journals provided insights into how these beliefs may link to future classroom teaching practice and ways teacher educators can help preservice teachers to view their students' backgrounds and abilities as resources, not problems.

Research in preparing preservice teachers for a diverse population of learners stresses the importance of reflection and the journal-writing process. Although beginning teachers bring with them their own sense of orientation and set of beliefs, some argue that these beliefs change over time through reflection and experience.

An ideal time for reflection to occur is during the student teaching experience, when preservice teachers begin to grapple with the realities of teaching. Beliefs change as a result of experience and conscious reflection (Shultz, Neyhart, & Reck, 1996). During their fieldwork experiences, preservice teachers are allowed to test their beliefs as they gather more and more knowledge. Cabello and Burstein (1995) asserted that for preservice teachers to become culturally sensitive and aware of diversity in the school system, they must be taught the importance of reflection:

> If we conceive of culture as a dynamic process of interaction, communication, socialization and education, then becoming culturally sensitive must also be a dynamic, ongoing process that includes knowledge, action and reflection. A program that engages teachers in this dynamic process will develop teachers who acknowledge, validate and address group and individual

differences between and within cultural groups. (p. 292)

The purpose of our study was to investigate ways in which preservice teachers' beliefs regarding diversity issues were revealed and realized in their classroom interactions, practices, and observations. The reflective journal method served as a focus and the primary data source for this investigation. The journal writing enabled us to create lasting, concrete products for further inquiry. As Kottkamp (1990) explained, journal writing enables us to "pause, cycle back, reread and rethink" our reflections both individually and as a team (p. 185).

Review of the Literature

Historically, scholars have touted the importance of reflecting on one's practice—spiritually, psychologically, and professionally. Dewey (1933) asserted that reflection enables educators to direct their activities with foresight and to plan according to the end in view. Education is inherent in everything we do, and a trustworthy pattern of inquiry and reflection allows a learner to move beyond representations of difficulty and on to resolution (Kruse, 1997). In his influential inquiries into the nature and practice of reflection in education, Schon (1987) concluded that skilled practitioners are reflective practitioners, thus sparking a movement toward teacher education programs with a reflective emphasis (Brooker & O'Donoghue, 1996).

There is a growing interest in and serious attention to self-inquiry among teacher educators (Clift & Veal, 1995; Fleischer, 1995; Harrington, Quinn-Leering, & Hodson, 1996; Richards, Moore, & Gipe, 1996). While the field of education overwhelmingly supports the practice of reflection, several issues have triggered controversy. Some theorists question the emphasis on reflection for preservice teachers simply because students do not have enough knowledge about the practice of education to engage in anything other than "reflection on ignorance" (Ferguson, 1989, p. 37). However, Smyth (1989) maintained that preservice teachers need the opportunity to reflect early on in order to link coursework with their intuitive understandings and beliefs. Kagan (1992) concurred, stating that individuals enter teacher education programs with set personal beliefs. To grow as professionals, they must modify prior images and evolve in their thinking through reflection. If teacher education programs can effectively establish a forum that embraces the process of reflection, the quality of reflection during the student teaching experience could be much higher, guiding the development of conscientious practitioners (Pultorak, 1996). Thus, educational programs are challenged to foster learning environments in which preservice teachers can develop the skills and habits of reflection (Osterman, 1990). In fact, recent educational renewal efforts in professional development schools have been designed to provide such opportunities (Rhodes & Bellamy, 1999).

Currently, teacher education programs promote varying methods of reflective practice, including peer observation meetings, group seminars, reflective interviews, portfolios, and reflective written journals (Collier, 1999). However, as Collier cautioned, "reflective practice is a unique and individual development process. Just as individual perspectives on knowing influence how student teachers adapt and assimilate their experiences, conceptual levels used by student teachers indicate their mode of reflection" (p. 179). Furthermore, certain methods of reflection may produce varying levels of results, since each method provides a range of platforms from which to generate thought and ultimately change. Therefore, preservice teachers should first identify an intended outcome before following a specific method of reflection.

Journal writing, widely supported as a way to capture one's reflections (Dieker & Monda-Amaya, 1995; McKernan, 1991; SooHoo, 1991), can be used by teacher-researchers to document the classroom or school, develop a personal case history, and/or inform educators about their teaching as no other method can, thereby helping teachers to implement changes rapidly (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1995). Frequently used journal formats include the critical incident journal and the daily journal. The critical incident journal focuses on a particular event, related questions

and reactions, and subsequent influences or ramifications. The daily journal is a running account of important events and interactions of concern, with the educator asking, "What happened?" "Why did it happen?" and "What are the implications for practice?" When we journal, according to Kottkamp, "we often pause, cycle back, reread and rethink the very descriptions and ideas we are in the process of formulating and inscribing" (p. 185). We essentially create a lasting product that allows for further self-evaluation and reflection down the road. For the purposes of this investigation, we implemented a variation of the daily journal model. We then evaluated those journals and searched for themes and commonalties revealed within the journal narratives.

Situating the Self-Study

The goal of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program in the School of Education at the University of Colorado at Denver (UC-D) is to address typical urban and diversity issues related to the inclusion of all students. As part of an urban institution, the School of Education has a commitment to working with urban public schools. The ITE program is dedicated to the renewal of schools and universities and the education of involved faculty, with an emphasis on the relationship between education and democracy. The focus on *renewal*, rather than *reform*, demonstrates an ongoing process of self-examination, reflection, and change.

Rhodes and Bellamy (1999), have suggested that teacher education programs work together with professional development schools to become models of instructional and learning excellence for all students as well as preservice teachers, clinical teachers, and teacher education professors. Because the ITE program is designed to prepare postbaccalaureate preservice teachers to assume active leadership roles, upon entering the program students select a leadership area that provides them with an additional area of expertise corresponding to significant needs of the partnership schools. These leadership areas include bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL), inclusionary practices and special education, information and learning technologies, literacy, math and science, teaching for mental health, and young children.

The two leadership area professors involved in this investigation, one in bilingual education and ESL and the other in inclusionary practices and special education, spend a minimum of 1 day per week in their professional development partner schools working as coaches and mentors to a group of preservice teachers and the school faculty. Using principles of action research, these professors engaged their students in a reflective journal project aimed at self-examination of how their beliefs regarding diversity issues were revealed in their classroom interactions, practices, and observations.

Methods

Participants

The leadership area professors solicited seven ITE graduate preservice student teachers from their two partner schools to engage in this effort. Many of the ITE students are older than traditional preservice teachers, having chosen teaching as a second career. All students were enrolled in either the bilingual and ESL or the inclusionary practices leadership areas. Student profile data are provided in Table 1. Prior to their field experiences, all students had completed a minimum of 15 graduate credit hours of the same course sequence. These courses were completed in 1 full semester and an optional summer session and included child development, elementary teaching methods, and school law and ethics. All students had completed 2 full semesters of coursework.

The journal activity took place as the participants were engaged in a full-year internship requirement within their partner schools. These sites were both large, urban elementary schools serving predominately Latino students from a background of low socioeconomic status. Both schools provided an array of bilingual and special education services—for example, sustained Spanish instruction, sustained bilingual instruction, diagnostic evaluations in the students' domi-

TABLE 1

PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUNDS

Pre-service Teacher	*Age*	*Ethnicity*	*Gender*	*Religious Affiliation*	*SES During Childhood*	*School Environment During Childhood*	*First Language and Other Languages*	*BA*	*Prior Work History*
1	29	Caucasian	Female	Catholic	Middle	Public suburban	English	Education	Preschool teacher
2	26	Caucasian	Female	None	Upper-middle	Public urban	English	Sociology	Catering director
3	28	Caucasian	Female	Presbyterian	Upper-middle	Public suburban	English	Psychology and English	Worked with persons with disabilities
4	31	African American	Male	Baptist	Low	Public urban	English	Criminal justice	Counselor
5	27	Caucasian	Female	None	Middle	Public rural	English and Spanish	Humanities	Restaurant and forest service employee
6	28	Asian American	Female	None	Low-middle	Public urban	Korean, English, and Spanish	Psychology and ethnic studies	Preschool teacher
7	42	Caucasian	Female	Catholic	Low	Private urban	English and Spanish	Sociology	Telephone company employee

nate language, age-level grade placements, and district-wide inclusive policies.

PROCEDURE

The ITE program advocates that all students have the right to be welcomed and taught by teachers who are knowledgeable, capable, willing, and prepared to meet their needs. To further this aim, we investigated individual understandings of diversity through the examination of preservice teachers' written reflections as they began to work in diverse, urban settings. We support a broader definition of *diversity* that includes factors of culture, language, ethnicity, race, ability, gender, socioeconomic level, religion, age, and sexual orientation (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). The project goal was to identify individual and shared themes that would enhance personal understandings of ways in which preservice teachers' beliefs regarding diversity issues were revealed in their classroom interaction, practices, and observations and provide added direction to the ITE program.

Beginning at the start of the fall semester and continuing through the entire school year, all participants committed to engaging in the process of written reflection in their journals. Entries were not expected to reflect polished writing, since attention to grammatical conventions was not a priority. Participants were encouraged to find a quiet, peaceful place to engage in thoughtful reflection about any or all of the following prompts:

In what ways am I a teacher who is knowledgeable about

- My students' backgrounds and abilities as well as my own (e.g., cultural, linguistic, experiential, learning backgrounds).
- The impact of intercultural understanding and communication.
- My students' background and home context.
- My students' educational needs within the contexts of the classroom, school, neighborhood, district, and community.

In their reflections, participants could address their personal beliefs and interactions as well as those of others within the schools. Written reflections could consist of an episode the student was involved in, witnessed, or heard; elements of planning; reactions to any of these: and/or questions that occurred during or afterward. Serious attention was given to issues of confidentiality, both as a group and on an individual basis. Aside from an occasional clarifying question from a student, no structured conversations regarding this project were held by the leadership area professors until midway through the school year when the group came together for an initial discussion of common themes and issues.

Data Analysis

The primary data source for this study was a journal that each participant kept during a full school year of residency work. A critical interpretive analysis of the preservice teachers' journals was enhanced by a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (Kuckartz, 1998). Transcribed journals were first analyzed by conducting multiple readings of all written entries. This enabled the authors to attain a thorough awareness of the content of all journals. Using interpretive content analysis (Baxter, 1992; Krippendorf, 1980), the authors examined the participants' entries for common themes, coded identified themes, and arrived at a consensus of central themes. Interrater reliability for coding the participants' themes was 91.4%. Next, texts from all journals were analyzed using WinMax software (Kuckartz, 1998) to detect the occurrence of specific words describing the themes. The repeated presence of key words (Table 2) contributed to the identification and later validation of themes.

Our analyses suggest that the participants' reflective journaling revealed a strong, consistent, often passionate pattern of responding about their beliefs and practices in their efforts to meet the needs of learners of diverse backgrounds and abilities. The identification of common themes provided insights into the ways in which these beliefs may link to preservice teachers' future classroom teaching practice as well as ways teacher educators could facilitate that link.

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to identify common themes that provide insights into the ways in which preservice teachers' reflections reveal ways in which their beliefs informed their classroom teaching practice during a yearlong internship. An analysis of all journal texts revealed the clear presence of three shared themes among all participants: (a) the value of equity in classroom instruction and practices; (b) the value of family involvement and interactions; and (c) the value of cultural sensitivity and understanding in classroom instruction and interactions. Both qualitative and quantitative text analyses substantiated the presence of key words and/or phrases associated with those identified themes. Words used to discuss the theme included but were not limited to the key descriptors provided in Table 3.

It should be noted that the journals varied significantly in length, from the required one entry per week to several per week. In addition, there was vast variation in the length of an entry, from a few paragraphs to several pages of typed text. While the presence of key descriptors across each

TABLE 2

TEXT ANALYSIS REPORT

Participant	*Special Education*	*Bilingual Education*	*Parental Involvement*	*Instructional Planning*	*Number of Entries*	*Distribution of Entries by Paragraph Length*[a]
1	40	12	35	56	17	S = 0 M =1 L = 16
2	18	15	75	44	13	S = 0 M = 2 L =11
3	43	17	41	138	23	S =0 M =11 L =12
4	1	1	7	7	6	S = 0 M = 0 L =6
5	21	28	39	85	19	S = 4 M = 3 L = 12
6	15	17	48	70	8	S =0 M = 0 L =8
7	18	9	20	39	9	S = 0 M = 3 L =6

Note. *Numbers represent the number of lines in each participant's journal in which a word or words from a theme's operational definition was identified in the text by the WinMax software.*

[a] *S = short, <1 paragraph; M = medium, 2–3 paragraphs; L = long, > 3 paragraphs.*

theme was tracked for each participant (see Table 2), in addition to the number of entries and a corresponding rating of the relative length, the level of complexity of the problem or the degree of emotion was not. A summary of the thematic content analysis of the transcriptions of all participants' journal reflections relative to the identified theme follows. These excerpts are unedited and representative entries from each participant and are intended to clarify the thematic findings.

The Value of Equity in Classroom Planning and Practices

All participants described their efforts to establish ongoing, equitable, meaningful opportunities for educational success and access to the curriculum through instructional accommodations and groupings. Their experiences parallel the value held by the ITE program: meeting the needs of individual learners through differentiated instruction and

TABLE 3

THEME DESCRIPTORS

Theme	*Descriptors*
Special education	Inclusion, special education, disability, services, needs, accommodation, modification, individualized education program/IEP, tracking
Bilingual education	Bilingual, Spanish, English as a second language/ESL, language, sustained, acquisition, Hispanic, multicultural, minority
Parental involvement/ environmental issues	Parent, conference, mom/mother, dad/father, family, home, neighborhood, community
Instructional planning	Lessons, materials, teach, learn, cooperative groups, literacy, literature, interest, motivate, behavior management, classroom management, testing bias

accommodations that are fair but not necessarily equal or the same. One student's story was representative:

> One experiment in my electricity unit was to form a human circuit to show how switches worked. To include everyone in the class I designed three different switch circuits (light switch, doorbell, and Morse code). The switch would connect, the conductors shook because electrons were flowing through them, and then the light bulb came on (putting their hands in the air). For the Morse code exercise we sent a message to the class for them to decode. When I announced that science was over, there were actual groans. I now see the benefits of cooperative learning. There were no fights, normally quiet children were the most animated I had seen, two of my students with special needs wanted to show the principal what they had done. This is why I want to teach, to truly engage each learner in my classroom.

Participants' comments revealed insights into strategic planning efforts aimed at meeting the unique language and learning needs of students.

> Today I realized the power of accommodating work to a student's ability. I was working with a student who has mental retardation. I took him out into the hall and read the questions on the math test for him and let him find the answers using manipulatives. I told him he was to complete four of the six problems. He actually completed all six. Normally, he would have laid his head down on his desk and not even looked at the test. With some accommodations he did all of his work. The power of accommodations and 1:1 work is truly amazing when you experience it first hand and you're not reading about it in a book.

Another student spoke of her planning efforts:

> I have been working with a student who is placed in a bilingual fourth grade, and is reading at a first grade level. I've begun making him a spelling list different than the other students. He takes that spelling test every Friday. It's only been a few weeks and he is now able to do the spelling homework and has been making great grades on his spelling tests. He gets excited every Monday for his list of words. When I gave

him 10 he asked for 12 for the next week. His positive change in behavior has been very noticeable in the classroom.

Participants realized that in addition to planning efforts, treating students equitably also had to do with their own interactions and practices.

> One little girl in my kindergarten classroom has some emotional challenges and often comes to school in ripped, dirty clothes, with uncombed hair. She recently got a haircut, but it is ragged and uneven. On the day of school pictures, I asked her if she wanted a comb and she flatly refused. I knew the issue needed to be approached in a more sensitive and delicate manner. Once the teacher and I began to pass out combs to all the children, she accepted. She smiled when I told her she could keep the comb and I saw her pull it out several times that day.

Numerous entries reflected on the value of teaching acceptance of differences, including ability, ethnic, religious, and sexual. One student spoke of her experiences:

> I sat in on a group of students finishing a reading project. One of the girls started to talk about her older brother's math teacher. She said that her brother didn't like him because he is gay. I asked the girl why her brother thought he was gay. She said that her brother said that he talked funny and that her mom said that he was gay. She then added that her mom didn't like him either. I told the student that I had a male teacher who happened to be gay. He was my 7th grade reading teacher and I mentioned that he was a great teacher and I never thought that his being gay got in the way of his teaching. I didn't offer an opinion that homosexuality was okay with me, I really wanted to avoid that, but I did want her to understand that you must separate the person from singular personal attributes. In other words, you need to value someone for what they do and not pieces of who they are. The girl seemed to listen; I tried not to lecture and to keep it brief.

The Value of Family Involvement and Interactions

As reflected in their journal entries, the participants' prevailing attitude was the belief that fostering proactive, positive family involvement is a critical part of their role. In addition, they reflected on the potential insights and benefits of family interactions and involvement regarding classroom behaviors, relationships, and instruction. Each participant revealed a deep appreciation of the demands faced by parents of children with diverse needs and from diverse backgrounds. For example, one student said:

> One mother of a little boy truly amazed me. I was taken back by how young she looked; I knew she was younger than I was and had a 6 year old. I know that her son is doing incredibly well in school. As we spoke I learned how difficult her life is, working two jobs, yet her devotion to her child was inspiring—it was clear that he always comes first. It felt wonderful to share all of her son's accomplishments as nothing could have made her happier. After thinking about her for a few days, I came to the conclusion that I was particularly struck by our closeness in age and the huge gap between our lifestyles. She is a mother; I am in graduate school. She takes care of her son when he is sick; I have a cat. She has two jobs; my parents support me while I'm in school. I point out the differences not to judge but to demonstrate my sincere admiration for this woman. I may be able to handle a classroom, but I know that raising a child is far more difficult. Some people might look at the two of us and pass judgment but I think the mother of this amazing little boy has achieved things I can only dream of accomplishing.

Another student told a particularly poignant story of growth in understanding:

> What an incredible parent/teacher conference I just had with the mother of a student with behavioral needs. People in the school have expressed concern when dealing with

her. She tends to be on the attack and immediately puts everyone on the defense, so she never sees herself having a role. During the conference, I made it clear that my feelings toward her son were strong and that I cared for him very much. I also discussed, with examples, the improvements I have seen in his behavior. Even though he is not where we want him to be, he has made some clear improvements, and I highlighted these as much as possible. Within a half-hour she was asking us questions and for our advice. Soon she was sharing family stories about his father. Her stories created that awful lump dead in the center of my throat. I had to fight to keep my composure. Oh, but how telling this information was. Her son is depressed and has spoken of suicide. Listening provided many insights into her son's behavior. By the end, we each hugged each other. I learned and sympathized with her needs. I understood her in a new way. I understood her anger—it covered up her pain. This is exactly what her son does. Information can change the way you behave with your students.

Each participant demonstrated a genuine commitment to establishing, nurturing, and maintaining positive family involvement. Sample comments include the following:

> From a recent conversation, I can now see the motive behind B's behaviors at school. It makes me very sad knowing that such young kids have such difficult lives. I think teaching is going to be about 99% of this. I think it will be crucial for me to know my students, their family lives and situations. It would be impossible to ignore students' home contexts as a teacher. Becoming familiar with the learners' backgrounds will make me an effective teacher. Is this taking on too big of a role?

> The conferences that seemed to work best were those [in which] the teacher gave the initial option for a conference time and then negotiated a time for those parents who didn't sign up. I like the idea of trying to get the parents as involved as possible, this connection seems so valuable! A goal of mine will be to try to figure out how to get involvement with each parent.

The Value of Cultural Sensitivity and Understanding in Classroom Instruction and Interactions

Generalized statements of commitment to consciously and proactively create and take advantage of opportunities to gain an enhanced understanding of participants' interests and environments were found throughout the journals. One student described her efforts to directly link individual interests:

> What do I really know about students' backgrounds? And what do I want to know? I've designed a survey for students and their parents to take to help me answer these questions. A couple of responses mentioned an important value of caring about family. The holidays celebrated included birthdays, Christmas, Semana Santa, and 12 de Diciembre. They stated that they celebrated holidays with family and food. In my reading group, I've decided to address the Latino culture with the book *Chato's Kitchen* by Gary Soto. I'll use *Annie and the Old One* by Miska Miles to incorporate relations with family. So far my reading group loves *Chato's Kitchen*. The story has parts in both English and Spanish. The jargon or hip parts are in Spanish. I think that the kids love this. They liked the story because of the language and because it relates to food that is from their culture.

Participants found that respectfully using naturally occurring school activities was an effective way to enhance all students' understandings.

> I spent time getting to know one child with special needs. He is receiving speech/communication services and is in the lowest reading group. He is also a Native American Indian and seems quite proud of his ancestry. In the library, I helped him find several

books about Native American Indians. He had a writing project, where he was to write about an island that you were the king of. The student wrote that he didn't have to wear "white man's clothes: and he lived in a teepee, while his subjects had to live in "white man's house." This really struck me. One might read anger into his writing. I, though, saw no anger, rather a sense of pride. The boy told me that his parents participate in Native American dancing. I'll make sure I invite them in to class for a presentation.

During the after-school art program, we were making Thanksgiving books illustrating things we were thankful for. D. wrote and drew pictures of things he was thankful for. He pointed out two pictures—a Mexican flag and an American flag—and said, "Every time I draw an American flag, I have to draw the Mexican flag, because I'm Mexican American." What a neat kid. There were times as a child when I was ashamed; it was always when someone discredited my culture and language. When others found my culture interesting, it made me feel proud.

Christmas is approaching, I'm wondering how all of the different cultures are being taken into account. What types of customs do my students have at Christmas? My clinical teacher is sending home a questionnaire asking different students to talk with their families and find out their customs. I know I will be teaching the different customs and practices of Kwanzaa and Hanukkah.

I was working with a sub and teaching a lesson on "Main Ideas" and used the example of different types of restaurants. I quickly realized that the children had little frame of reference for "sit-down" vs. "fast-food" restaurants, when the sub asserted, "I don't think these kids have had any experience with the fancier restaurants. I don't think they know what you are talking about." I was humiliated, and knew I had made a mistake. I felt the sub had judged the kids by her comment. This experience taught me the importance of putting myself in my students' place. No, I don't live in this community, but I should have and I will now familiarize myself with the local restaurants in an effort to help my students make meaningful connections.

Conclusion

Schools today are rich with cultural diversity. National demographic trends (Simpson, Whelan, & Zabel, 1993) as well as profile data from this teacher education program (Taylor & Sobel, 2001) strongly support the increasing cultural diversity within the student population in contrast to decreased diversity in the teaching force. Preparing teachers for cultural diversity has been an often-cited weakness in teacher preparation programs (Powell, Zehm, & Garcia, 1996; Voltz, 1998). Griffin and Pugach (1977) cautioned that teacher preparation programs will not be able to assist prospective teachers in addressing systemic problems of race, class, and culture unless these programs specifically address diversity in all of its complexities. This investigation provided the framework for preservice teachers to raise their level of awareness regarding issues of diversity and to see their students' backgrounds and abilities as resources, not problems. This study emphasized that reflective journaling is an effective way for teacher educators to encourage preservice teachers to address issues of diversity within their own belief system and classroom practices. The identification of common themes provided insights into the ways in which these beliefs may link to preservice teachers' future classroom teaching practice as well as ways teacher educators can facilitate that growth.

As advocated by Seidl and Pugach (1998) this investigation sought to examine the preservice teachers' commitment to providing an equitable education for all. Results indicate that they were concerned with paying attention to equity and diversity issues. Taking action on their concerns, they initiated activities that fostered parental involvement and instructional programming for students with diverse needs and from diverse

backgrounds. We found that the participants' experiences taught them to genuinely recognize and honor individual identity needs. In future investigations we will examine preservice teachers' preliminary attempts to educate responsibly in their own classrooms during their first year of teaching.

The reflective focus of this project aided in preparing preservice teachers to critically examine the educational structures in which they worked with regard to issues of equity. Given that these preservice teachers have elected areas of focus in bilingual and special education, they should take a leadership role in addressing issues of diversity. Yet leadership takes expertise. In mid-year and end-of-year follow-up conversations with each of the participants, the results of this investigation were shared. All participants agreed that the process of reflective journaling had served as a tool for guiding explicit conversations about these challenges. Engaging in these conversations can be especially difficult work. Yet, these preservice teachers concurred that their ability to engage in thoughtful dialogue that clarified their understandings of how their beliefs influenced their practice has increased. They provided the following examples of how they would use the understandings they had gained in their future classroom practice: (a) videotaping and critiquing their own teaching with attention to diversity issues; (b) conducting ethnographic studies of individual student and community practices; (c) securing more training in strategies to differentiate instruction; and (d) scheduling time to conduct home visits.

Experts in teacher preparation have long called for issues of diversity to be embedded throughout a teacher education program as opposed to a discrete course on multiculturalism. We concur with Shultz and colleagues (1996) that the solution to preparing teachers for students' diversity is not found solely in approaches and methodologies, but in understanding how teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions are interwoven with their knowledge, skills, and behaviors in classroom teaching. Reflective journaling served to extend coursework into the real working context of the classroom.

The results of this study are consistent with research that emphasizes reflective practice as an effective tool to stimulate the thinking, discussion, and productive action of teacher educators. The journal investigation served as both dialogue and a carefully structured activity aimed at addressing diversity in a meaningful, embedded manner.

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AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Abstract

We examined the empirical literature dating from 1979 to 2002 on the involvement of parents of African American students with special needs in their children's schooling. The purpose was to determine (a) the quantity of empirical studies on this topic, (b) the overall quality and form of this research, (c) specific outcomes of the studies, and (d) efforts by researchers and/or schools to improve any of these factors. Findings suggest the lack of a substantive body of empirical work in this area and insufficient reporting of critical information such as a sample selection, data collection, and data-analysis procedures. A substantial increase in the number of studies published within the last decade indicates that schools and researchers are beginning to acknowledge the need for further investigations in this area.

As discussions of educational reform become focused on charter schools, voucher systems, and privatization, one can logically conclude that increased parental involvement in educational decisions is a primary goal of these initiatives. Indeed, the importance of parental involvement in schooling has been addressed by researchers in the past and continues to be an area in need of further research. Some of the studies to date have linked increased levels of parental involvement to positive educational outcomes, including greater motivation to learn, better behavior, higher grades, and improved standardized test scores (Epstein, 1991; Henderson, 1988; Johnson & Walker, 1991). In addition, when teachers make parental involvement an integral part of their teaching practice, parents often increase their own level of interaction with their children at home, report increased confidence in their abilities to help their elementary school children with schoolwork, and perceive teachers as more respectful and competent in their roles (Becker & Epstein, 1982). An interesting longitudinal study (Berruta-Clement, Scweinhiart, Barnett, Epstein, & Weikart, 1984, as cited in Ascher, 1988) found better attendance, decreased delinquency, and lower pregnancy rates among teenage graduates of a preschool program in which parental involvement was a key component.

Yet many educators counter that despite their best efforts they are unable to elicit participation in school-related activities from certain parents. In

particular, low participation levels are associated with parents of culturally and linguistically diverse and low-income students, as well as students in special education or English as a second language classes (Griffith, 1998). Researchers who have explored low participation among these groups have concluded that poor communication between professionals and parents (Gillis-Olion, Olion, & Holmes, 1986), lack of trust by parents in the educational system, logistical constraints (e. g., lack of telephone, transportation, child care) and/or disagreement with special education classifications may all contribute to the perpetuation of this pattern. Harry (1992) also pointed to a lack of respect by teachers for different parenting styles, whereas Kalyanpur and Rao (1991) maintained that educators' focus on student deficits rather than strengths is a contributing factor to low parental involvement among specific groups.

We examined the literature pertaining to school involvement and an understanding of the special education process by the parents of African American children with special needs. Specifically, we wanted to assess the quantity of research related to this particular group of parents, evaluate the quality and form this research is taking in the field of special education, and summarize the results of any outcome-based studies. In addition, we wanted to take note of efforts by schools and researchers to improve any of the factors just mentioned. Our expectations were that the research in this area would be scarce and of inconsistent quality. We also expected that the trend in recent years would be toward a slow but steady increase in this body of research due to a decrease in the culturally and linguistically diverse teaching force, overrepresentation of African American students in special education, and the dropout rate of African American students in special education. First, we begin with a description of the methods used in our literature search. Then we summarize the results of our search in terms of the quantity, quality, form, and outcomes of the research we found. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for current efforts by schools to increase parental involvement and provide recommendations for future research.

METHOD

CRITERIA FOR ARTICLE SELECTION

Our search of the electronic databases for research related to involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents began with a wide net that we necessarily narrowed as the focus of our study narrowed. However, it is important to mention our earliest searches in this process in order to demonstrate the limited empirical research that we found related to parent involvement for culturally and linguistically diverse families in general. In fact, our decision to concentrate on African American parental involvement was driven not only by our initial research questions and hypotheses, but also by the available research in this area. Hopefully, future researchers will benefit from the careful description of our search criteria and processes.

Our initial search criteria began with a focus on the research spanning from 1979 to 2002. We were primarily interested in obtaining research-based articles, both qualitative and quantitative, that either (a) examined the issues related to parental involvement for culturally and linguistically diverse populations or (b) demonstrated empirical evidence related to interventions designed to improve the home–school connection for these groups.

Initially, we completed four independent searches and used the following descriptors:

1. Parent involvement and minority students and special education (ERIC and PsychLit).
2. Parental involvement or family involvement and special education and barriers.
3. Donna Ford Harris (author descriptor).
4. Parent involvement and special education and minority.

Once this process had been completed, we ascertained which broad area contained the most work related to specific parent involvement research before we decided which specific area to focus on. Ultimately, the training and research programs dealing with African American parents most directly dealt with special education issues as they relate to parental involvement. The logical

conclusion was to use databases that were specialized and/or related to education, families, or special education (e.g. Family and Society Studies Worldwide, Exceptional Child Education Resources [ERIC]) in our search for information. However, the inclusion and exclusion of electronic databases used in the literature search were based on the limited accessibility of technology at participating university libraries. Furthermore, some databases (e.g. ERIC, Psychlit, Wilson, Ebsco) were chosen because they provided a general foundation for the amount and quality of content in the field before researchers narrowed their searches to identify additional literature. In addition, auxiliary databases, including Education Abstracts, Anthropological Literature, and PsychINFO, were employed as a "net" to ensure that names and topics were cross referenced to conduct an extensive search and exhaust all viable options based on our available technology. The Dissertation Abstracts Database was not used. Although dissertations were recognized for their valuable information, they were not included in our examination of the literature due to the lack of a peer-reviewed process. Despite the fact that dissertation committees are composed of advisors, professors, and experts in the field who provide guidance and feedback for doctoral candidates in the dissertation process, it is distinctively different in comparison to the peer-review process employed by refereed journals. Consequently, a team decision was made to focus solely on articles and studies that were included in peer-reviewed journals.

It is also important to note that we searched directly from the reference lists in some seminal works for related research. Some of the articles we chose for this study, then, came from this process rather than a straight database listing. Our review is of the literature related to the studies that explore school involvement and an understanding of the special education process by African American parents, as well as efforts of schools and researchers to improve involvement among the parents.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

To collect data related to our review of the literature on this topic, we devised a coding format that incorporated the following categories:

1. Identification of source data: authors, date, source title.
2. Student characteristics: age, placement, identifying conditions for children of the parents in the study/article.
3. Descriptive family data: ethnicity, location (urban or rural), socioeconomic status, education of parents.
4. Descriptive school data: rural/urban, special education or integrated, private or public, level (preschool–high school range).
5. Sample selection: random, screened, not specified.
6. Research type: descriptive, qualitative, empirical, experimental, field, quantitative, case study, ethnography, combination of types/other.
7. Data collection procedure: tests, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, observations, rating scales.
8. Data analysis procedure: descriptive, statistical analysis.
9. Issues addressed in source: parental awareness, parental attitudes, school/teacher attitudes, student progress, parental involvement, barriers/concerns.
10. Outcomes orientation: findings related to any empirical, survey, or other research.

We sought to determine the quantity of research related to African American parent involvement, its quality, the form this research is currently taking in the field of special education, and the results of any outcome-based studies. Each researcher was assigned articles to code according to the established coding categories. To avoid potential threats to compatibility when new data emerged that were not previously coded, we discussed the data's importance, gave justification for including them in the coding criteria, and

determined whether they met the criteria for inclusion in the literature review (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After reading all the articles, we tallied a total number of percentages of each category on our coding sheet. Percentages were calculated and analyzed to magnify the pertinent themes addressed in the articles.

Results

The application of the aforementioned criteria allowed us to identify 10 articles on African American parents of children with disabilities involved in special education programs (see Table 1). We divided these articles into two categories: position papers and qualitative studies. Position papers present useful information on a given topic, drawing on empirical and conceptual knowledge from the literature in the field with the sole purpose of presenting the author's opinion. Qualitative studies consist of detailed descriptions, direct quotations, and case documentation that are collected as open-ended narratives to reveal an experience or situation (Patton, 1980). Using our criteria, we identified six theoretical papers and four qualitative studies. Consistent with our expectations, there were no quantitative studies found.

The publication dates of these articles ranged from 1979 to 2000. Despite our attempts to identify published articles in 2001 and 2002, no empirical studies were found. Although the earliest article was published in 1979, the next article regarding African American parent involvement in special education was not published until 1984. Nine of the articles were published within a 16-year span from 1984 to 2000 (see Table 2).

The most noticeable trend in these data shows the lack of research concerning participation of African American parents of children with disabilities. Ten articles, six of which were position papers, do not reflect a substantive body of empirical work. In the following section, we summarize the components of the six position papers. Next, we provide an overview of each qualitative study. Finally, we identify the strengths and weaknesses of the qualitative studies.

Topics of Position Papers

After reviewing the literature on involvement of African American parents in the education of their children with disabilities, several topics emerged. Common topics included (a) barriers to parental involvement, (b) strategies to increase parental involvement, (c) parent perceptions and beliefs, (d) parental knowledge, (e) teacher perceptions and beliefs, (f) teacher training, (g) disproportionality, and (h) characteristics of African American families (see Table 3).

Barriers to parental involvement. As the data indicate, two of six position papers discussed barriers to parental involvement. Marion (1979) reported that parents' previous knowledge and experience with segregation and special education in integrated settings contributed to lack of African American parental involvement. According to Harry (1992), an unbalanced power dynamic influenced by deficit views of African American families and children's learning difficulties can be an overwhelming barrier to overcome.

Strategies to increase parental involvement. In addition, all six position papers mentioned strategies for increasing involvement of African American parents. Two of these focused on the interaction between teachers and parents: making home visits (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986), and involving the extended family (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986). Additional strategies focus on the use of nontraditional ways to involve parents, such as planning a Parent's Day when parents are invited to share cultural activities with the class (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986). Others include involving parents in planning parent programs (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986), developing parent training programs (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986; Obiakor, Algozzine, & Ford, 1993; Serwatka, Dove, & Hodge, 1986), providing opportunities for parents to visit (Obiakor et al., 1993), and including the family in the identification process (Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997). In addition, Harry (1992) suggested the development of new roles for parents as assessors, presenters of reports, policymakers, and advocates. Furthermore, interpersonal skills

TABLE 1

TITLES, NAME OF JOURNALS, AND AUTHORS OF POSITION PAPERS AND QUALITATIVE STUDIES IN THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Title of Article	*Journal*	*Author(s)*
Position Papers		
Minority Parent Involvement in the IEP Process: A Systematic Model Approach	*Focus on Exceptional Children*	Marion, R.
Black Students in Special Education: Issues and Implications for Community Involvement	*The Negro Educational Review*	Serwatka, T., Dove, T. & Warren, H.
Strategies for Interacting with Black Parents of Handicapped Children	*The Negro Educational Review*	Gillis-Olion, M., Olion, L., & Holmes, R.
Restructuring the Participation of African American Parents in Special Education	*Exceptional Children*	Harry, B.
Urban Education, the General Education Initiative, and Service Delivery to African American Students	*Urban Education*	Obiakor, F., Algozzine, B., & Ford, B.
Completing the Parent Participation Puzzle: Accepting Diversity	*Teaching Exceptional Children*	Linan-Thompson, S. & Jean, R.
Qualitative Studies		
Obstacles to the Participation of Black Parents in the Education Program of Their Handicapped Children	*Centering Teacher Education*	Patton, J. & Braithwaite, R
Empowering Low-Income Black Families of Handicapped Children	*American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*	Kalyanpur, R. & Rao, S.
Communication Versus Compliance: African American Parents' Involvement in Special Education	*Exceptional Children*	Harry, B., Allen, N., & McLaughlin, M.
Perspectives of an African American Mother on Parent–Professional Relationships in Special Education	*Mental Retardation*	Rao, S.

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TABLE 2

PUBLICATION DATES OF ARTICLES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Title	*Publication Date*
Minority Parent Involvement in the IEP Process: A Systematic Model Approach	1979
Obstacles to the Participation of Black Parents in the Education Program of Their Handicapped Children	1984
Black Students in Special Education: Issues and Implications for Community Involvement	1986
Strategies for Interacting with Black Parents of Handicapped Children	1986
Empowering Low-Income Black Families of Handicapped Children	1991
Restructuring the Participation of African American Parents in Special Education	1992
Urban Education, the General Education Initiative, and Service Delivery to African American Students	1993
Communication Versus Compliance: African American Parents' Involvement in Special Education	1995
Completing the Parent Participation Puzzle: Accepting Diversity	1997
Perspectives of an African American Mother on Parent–Professional Relationships in Special Education	2000

between professionals and parents were primary strategies suggested to increase the involvement of African American parents. Professionals were advised to become participating listeners, show respect, build relationships (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986), and avoid jargon (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986; Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997).

Gillis-Olion and colleagues (1986) suggested using community resources as a strategy to increase parental involvement, including soliciting local ministers for support. Other strategies that schools should employ as policy to increase parental participation include using phone and written communication (Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997; Marion, 1979) and training peer parents or paraprofessionals to solicit the support of parents who teachers cannot reach (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986).

Parents' perceptions and beliefs. Three of six articles shared information regarding parents' perceptions and beliefs. Marion (1979) investigated parents' perceptions of labeling a child with disabilities. The article suggested that African American parents perceived the label *emotionally disturbed (ED)* as applying to troublemakers. In addition, the label *mentally retarded (MR)* was reserved for "dumb" or "not too bright." Additional articles discussed parents' perceptions and beliefs regarding improper testing (Gillis-

TABLE 3

COMMON TOPICS OF POSITION PAPERS

	Barriers to Parental Involvement	*Strategies for Parental Involvement*	*Parent Perceptions and Beliefs*	*Parental Knowledge*	*Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs*	*Teacher Training*	*Disproportionality*	*Characteristics of African America Families*
Minority Parent Involvement in the IEP Process: A Systematic Model Approach (Marion, 1979)	X	X	X				X	X
Black Students in Special Education: Issues and Implications for Community Involvement (Serwatka, Dove, & Warren, 1986)		X		X			X	
Strategies for Interacting with Black Parents of Handicapped Children (Gillis-Olion, Olion, & Holmes, 1986)		X	X	X	X		X	X
Restructuring the Participation of African American Parents in Special Education (Harry, 1992)	X	X			X			
Urban Education, the General Education Initiative, and Service Delivery to African American Students (Obiakor, Algozzine, & Ford, 1993)		X				X		
Completing the Parent Participation Puzzle: Accepting Diversity (Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997)		X	X					

Olion et al., 1986); the view of disabilities as sensory deficits, physical impairments, or cognitive impairments (Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997); negative feelings about services and professionals (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986); preference for oral communications (Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997); anger at overrepresentation of African American students in MR and ED classes (Gillis-Olion et al., 1986); and the comparisons of children with disabilities to friends and siblings (Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997).

Parental knowledge. Two of six articles reported the need to make parents more knowledgeable

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about the educational system. Gillis-Olion and colleagues (1986) stated that African American parents lack the information to gain access to the system and the ability to locate services. In addition, Serwatka and colleagues (1986) offered suggestions to work with parents to make them more knowledgeable consumers of the educational system. These suggestions included educating parents about their right to request that the testing process be conducted with the use of instruments such as the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA) and by Black psychologists when appropriate. In addition, parents should be made aware of their right to accept or reject the findings of such tests and that they can and should participate in planning their child's educational program.

Teacher perceptions and beliefs. Two of six articles reported teacher perceptions and beliefs. According to these articles (Gillins-Olion et al., 1986; Harry, 1992), teachers believed that parent apathy is a major factor in the reduction of involvement of African American parents in their children's education. According to Gillis-Olion and colleagues, the perceptions and beliefs of teachers are in contrast to the culture of the students and parents. To address this problem, these researchers recommended that teachers stop looking at working with African American parents as a step down or waste of valuable time. Teachers need to be aware of the variation in life-styles and structure of African American families and learn to look at these parents within the context of the parents' own cultural setting before any conjecture is made about their behavior.

Teacher training. One of six position papers provided information on teacher's knowledge and procedures to enhance their professional skills to increase parental participation. For special educators to maximize the parental participation of African American parents, it is strongly suggested that they participate in multicultural preparation programs (Obiakor et al., 1993).

Disproportionality. Three of six articles discussed the impact of the disproportionality of involvement of African American parents. Marion (1979) provided a historical overview detailing unpleasant experiences of African American parents leading to their present lack of participation in their children's education. In addition, Gillis-Olion and colleagues (1986) purported that African American parents have observed the disproportional placement of their children with disabilities in classes for students with mental retardation and emotional disorders. This practice has caused parents to become flustered and desperate, thus leading to a strained relationship with school professionals. Serwatka and colleagues (1986) offered solutions to the problem of disproportionality and overrepresentation of African American students in special education classes. These solutions included working with educational institutions to improve the identification and placement process, working with parents to make them more knowledgeable consumers of the educational system, using the legislative and litigation process in defending the rights of Black students and students with disabilities, and developing community services resources to be used in meeting the needs of the affected students and their parents.

Characteristics of African American families. Two of six articles reviewed characteristics of African American families. According to Gillis-Olion and colleagues (1986), African American parents of children with disabilities encounter more difficult parenting tasks as a result of lower expectations, economic discrimination, inferior medical services, racism, a decrease in the quality of life, great varieties in life-styles, and an increase in single mother-led households. Hill (1972, as cited in Marion, 1979), found that positive characteristics of African American families included (a) strong kinship bonds; (b) a strong work orientation; (c) adaptability to family roles; (d) a high achievement orientation; and (e) a strong religious orientation. On the other hand, Myrdal (1944) and Minuchin (1967), as cited in Marion (1979), ascribed the following negative characteristics to African American families: (a) unstable, (b) pathological, (c) lacking in productivity, and (d) having little faith in the value of education.

Descriptions of Qualitative Studies

Four qualitative studies were identified in our search pertaining to African American parental involvement in special education programs. In the most recent study, Rao (2000) focused on the perspectives of a low-income African American mother of a child with disabilities. The case study showed how the structure of special education and the behavior of professionals deterred the participation of an African American parent, Rose, the sole participant in the study. Misunderstandings with professionals, growing dissatisfaction with services and service providers, and the decision to withdraw her participation from the special education process were discussed. The investigator collected data using in-depth interviews and participant observation data. A constant comparative method was employed to analyze data. Central themes in the case study included the following: entering special education, losing trust, feeling judged, feeling disrespected, encountering labels, asking for services, and deciding to withdraw. The researcher concluded that the parent–professional relationship can be fragile in its earlier stages of development and special care must be provided to smooth out possible dissonance.

Four areas of dissonance were mentioned. First, professionals must be reminded that the common practice of labeling may be viewed differently by a parent and it is helpful to assist parents with a better understanding of labels and their implications in the child's education. Second, parents and professionals may disagree and assign value to particular parenting practices in a judgmental way rather than showing reciprocity and respect. Third, the perception of respectful or disrespectful behavior is a key factor in determining whether the parent will continue to participate in the child's educational program. The final area of dissonance is the identification of family needs and who will receive the services.

Harry, Allen, and McLaughlin (1995) conducted a longitudinal, 3-year study to determine the participation of African American parents of 24 preschoolers in special education programs. Three large urban elementary schools were chosen that reflected a range of social and economic backgrounds. Data-collection procedures included taped and nontaped ethnographic interviews with parents and professionals, observations of special education parent conferences, and the examination of student documents. A constant-comparative method of data analysis was used (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981). The study reported four main themes, labeled expectation to disillusionment, participation and advocacy, deterrents to advocacy, and familial support of children.

Despite traditional perceptions of low participation by African Americans, data showed that initial efforts by families were consistent. All parents created a structured environment that was supportive of educational and behavioral objectives, maintained early educational enrollment, and expressed faith in the value of education. However, participation was lessened due to a lack of meaningful communication with parents, disillusionment about the special education process, and a lack of avenues for proactive parents. Researchers identified four areas for practitioners to consider (a) untapping the potential of parents to be involved in the decision-making process; (b) the impact of labeling; (c) the perception of parental communication as a low priority; and (d) the identification of parents as adversaries to professionals rather than allies.

Kalyanpur and Rao (1991) focused on the interaction of parents and professionals to promote empowerment of African American families of children with disabilities. The qualitative study evaluated the interactions of four low-income single mothers with outreach agency professionals. These professionals were African Americans who maintained ongoing contact with the families over an 11-month period using extensive interviews and participant observations to develop an understanding of the families' perspectives regarding their relationships with professionals. A constant-comparative method was used to analyze the data. Data showed that two types of professional relationships existed. The first relationship was identified as *unempowering*. Major aspects of unempowering relationships included disrespect, a focus on deficits, and a discounting of differences in parenting styles. The second type of relationship, identified as an empowering relationship, included aspects of collaborative and supportive

interactions. Professionals in these relationships were found to be responsive to parents' needs and to have established a rapport with the parents.

The authors concluded by stating that services provided to low-income families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were often ineffective because the needs of the families were misunderstood or ignored. Empowerment was considered to be more than a strategy; it signified the changing role of a service provider from that of an expert to an ally who enables families to articulate their individual needs. The researchers suggested ways for teachers and other professionals to empower African American parents by building supportive relationships with parents, acknowledging parents' competence, and interacting with parents on equivalent terms.

A qualitative study by Patton and Braithwaite (1984) identified the obstacles and facilitators to the participation of African American parents in their children's special education programs. The participants included 56 low-income African American parents with children identified as having learning disabilities. Data were collected from interviews with participants from one large Southeastern city and one large Northeastern city. The data analysis procedure we employed consisted of analyzing the transcribed content for emergent themes, developing percentages for each theme based on the content of the interview answers, and then reporting the percentages in a "narrative" form. Emergent themes of the African American parents included the belief that no organization in the city was doing a good job helping parents (50%), the perception that family members and neighbors have the power to help make changes in improving children's education (34%), and the belief that more parent advocacy was needed to cause schools to change their actions to develop better programs (45%). Furthermore, many parents expressed a desire to attend workshops on how to access services (84%).

The researchers concluded that fragmented families have a weakened reliance on family and social networks. In urban areas, parents in the Northeast were better informed of their legal rights and were less hesitant to ask for assistance. However, both samples described feelings of isolation and helplessness. In addition, a majority of parents expressed a need for parent involvement including workshops focusing on community support systems, parent training sessions designed by parents with assistance from professionals, and the development of support systems for African American parents of children with disabilities. The researchers recommended that professionals in the field of education and other organizations, both local and national, plan and implement programs based on the needs of African American parents with children in special education programs.

Methodological Characteristics of Qualitative Papers

Sample Selection

A total of 97 parents participated in all studies reviewed. However, in this review, the selection of samples was not reported sufficiently in all of the studies. Specifically, one study (Kalyanpur & Rao, 1991) did not specify the procedure for selecting the parents. Only one study (Harry et al., 1995) reported a random selection of African American parents. In addition, two studies (Patton & Braithwaite, 1984; Rao, 2000) indicated a purposive sample to select participants.

Sample Characteristics

Type of household (i.e., two-parent, single female parent, grandparent, extended family) was reported in all studies. Participants in the study conducted by Harry and colleagues (1995) included single mothers and two-parent households. Only single mothers were participants in the qualitative study conducted by Kalyanpur and Rao (1991) and Rao (2000). Patton and Braithwaite (1984) reported that 20% of the sample lived in detached single family houses.

Three of the studies reported the socioeconomic status (SES) of the parents. These studies included participants in the low SES range (Kalyanpur & Rao, 1991; Patton & Braithwaite,

1984; Rao, 2000). However, in the study conducted by Harry and colleagues (1995), socioeconomic data were not identified due to their intrusive nature for a study that "relied on continuing rapport and respect for participants' privacy" (p. 366). There were no parents reported in the high SES range.

The educational level of the parents was reported in three studies (Harry et al., 1995; Kalyanpur & Rao, 1991; Rao, 2000). The educational level ranged from receiving high school credit hours to completing a college degree. The educational level of parent participants was not reported in one study (Patton & Braithwaite, 1984).

Data Collection

Studies reported the use of various data-collection procedures, including interviews, questionnaires, participation observations by researchers, and surveys. In-depth interviews and participation observations were used in the Rao (2000) study. Harry and colleagues (1995) administered surveys and conducted interviews to collect data from African American participants. Similarly, Kalyanpur and Rao (1991) employed surveys and questionnaires to investigate the degree of parental participation of African Americans with children with disabilities. Patton and Braithwaite (1984) also reported the use of interviews and questionnaires.

Trustworthiness

To address trustworthiness in the four qualitative studies, we referred to the naturalistic inquiry method described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The basic tenets of trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. *Credibility* refers to the ways of conducting a study to increase the probability that the study is believable. *Transferability* (parallel to external validity) deals with the issue of generalization in terms of case-to-case transfer. It concerns the researcher's responsibility to provide enough information or details on the case studied that readers can establish the degree of similarity between the case studied and the case to which findings are transferred. *Dependability*, which is synonymous to reliability, focuses on the researchers' responsibility to ensure that the inquiry process was traceable, logical, and documented. *Confirmability* ensures that the characteristics of the data are revealed, and not the biases of the investigator. To demonstrate confirmability, techniques such as triangulation, keeping a reflexive journal, and using confirmability audits will document the investigator's biases as well as limit their infusion into the data.

Rao (2000) included several components of trustworthiness in the qualitative study. To increase the transferability and dependability of the study, a thick description of the data collection was provided. Data collection included in-depth interviews and participation observations for a prolonged engagement of over a 9-month period. A total of 14 interviews, ranging in duration from 1.5 to 3 hours, were conducted at the participant's home. The observations were conducted at the participant's home, two parent workshops, and a school meeting, as well as times when the participant met with a service provider at her own home. Demonstrating confirmability, the investigator used the observations to ensure consistency and accuracy of information provided in the interviews. Documents (e.g., evaluation reports) shared with the investigator were used to triangulate the participant's experiences from the beginning of her search for services for her son until the present time. Furthermore, when the investigator shared initial findings from the study, the participant was engaged in a member-checking process to confirm prior assumptions and provided feedback to the investigator. Unique to this study, the investigator elucidated the process of establishing trust with the participant. Peer debriefing and reflexive journals were not discussed.

Harry and colleagues (1995) addressed many tenets of trustworthiness in their study. To establish credibility, the researchers invested 3 years' time to investigate African American parental involvement in special education in a large urban school district. Data were collected through persistent observation while using several sources and methods (i.e., ethnographic interviews with parents and professionals, observations of conferences, examination of students' documents) to verify whether one piece of data had any effect on

another. Based on varied data-collection sources and procedures, the researchers achieved considerable triangulation of data. They provided a thick description of the structures of the semi-structured interviews based on ethnographic tradition; interview times ranged from 45 minutes to 2.5 hours, increasing each year. Parents were interviewed in their homes or in a private room in the school building. Data also included informal or taped conversations with parents immediately or shortly following parent conferences and phone conversations. Field notes were completed after all observations and nontaped conversations. In their observations of conferences, researchers portrayed the role of observer as participating only to maintain a calm interpersonal climate. Descriptions of methods used to examine students' school documents were not offered. Peer debriefing, negative case analysis, reflexive journals, and member checking were not discussed in the study.

Kalyanpur and Rao (1991) also used methods to ensure the trustworthiness of their qualitative study. The prolonged engagement extended over 11 months to increase their understanding of the relationships between parents and special education professionals. Field notes were kept on the meetings at the agency and the workshop participants attended, as well as telephone conversations. Descriptions of peer debriefing, negative case analysis, reflexive journals, and member checking were not included.

Methods of establishing credibility including prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, reflexive journals, and member checking were not included in the Patton and Braithwaite (1984) study. The researchers did not provide an extensive description of the settings, which detracted from transferability. These issues may not have been included due to space limitations.

Data Analysis

Three studies analyzed the data using the constant comparison approach (Harry et al., 1995; Kalyanpur & Rao, 1991; Rao, 2000). The researchers defined this as an inductive approach by which incidents, comments, and opinions were coded according to the type of information revealed. These codes were then compared to each other to derive a set of thematic categories that classified the data. Explanations of these categories were then sought at a more abstract level of conceptualization, to provide the beginnings of theory development or to illustrate already existing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data-analysis procedures in Rao (2000) included simultaneous data collection and analysis working toward a goal of theory development. Different categories of data were constantly being compared with each other. Some initial coding categories included "pushing the disability label," "disrespect," "being poor and black," and "judgment." These categories were examined closely for similarities and differences in order to produce core categories for the study. The investigator used the core categories to create themes that accurately illustrated the participant's experiences in receiving services for her child with disabilities.

The data-analysis procedure conducted by Harry and colleagues (1995) consisted of preliminary coding and interpretation of data by the first author. Simultaneously, the second author double-checked the work of the first author. Finally, all authors participated in a higher-level interpretation of the findings. This process resulted in a set of 50 codes. Later, these codes were grouped into eight thematic categories. Finally, the report pertaining to parental participation in special education was formed around three themes.

The data analyzed by Kalyanpur and Rao (1991) consisted of analyzing the themes and generalizations that emerged to formulate the dynamics of outreach to culturally and linguistically diverse families and their perspectives on empowering family relationships. This was the only description of data analysis provided by the investigators.

Patton and Braithwaite (1984) analyzed the data using the case study approach; however, the investigators did not provide an operationalized definition for the procedures used in data analysis.

Limitations of Methodology

The present study had several limitations. First, to increase the replication of the literature search, more details about conducting the electronic search were needed. In the interest of saving space, only partial information was provided in relation to the descriptors used. For additional information, interested parties must contact the authors.

In addition, the hazards of conducting electronic searches must be noted. For example, partial or incorrect descriptors can produce different results for future researchers and reduce replicability. The use of different search engines can also produce different results than those we found. Based on these circumstances, we must acknowledge that our search may not be representative of an exhaustive search.

The final concern is the comparison of findings across generations of studies spanning more than 20 years. Because journals use different criteria and procedures for review and publication, we were careful to make sure that data were not taken out of context or misinterpreted. The primary purpose for examining extant literature related to African American parental involvement was to use it as a gauge to identify a starting point for research on this subject and document the accomplishments of past researchers. This valuable information was critiqued and will help to develop a research agenda that builds on current data to move the field forward.

Discussion

In this review of literature, we examined four qualitative studies and six position papers to determine the quality and quantity of articles related to African American parental involvement currently existing in the field of special education. The findings confirmed our expectation that there is a lack of empirical research focusing on the parental involvement of African Americans who have children with disabilities participating in special education programs. However, the studies reported in Table 1 give us some indication that scholars are finding this issue to be of some importance. Learning disability and special education journals are publishing such studies, but not at a high rate. Not enough emphasis is being placed on this important topic.

As a result of an extremely small number of existing qualitative studies, our review illustrates that much of parental involvement research to date contains methodological issues that need additional attention. There is a need to improve the procedures for design and implementation of parental involvement research. Our focus on these procedures is not a rejection of the scholarship of the researchers included in this literature review (Harry et al., 1995; Kalyanpur & Rao, 1991; Patton & Braithwaite, 1984; Rao, 2000). Their studies help us to realize the importance of parental involvement in special education. In addition, their work is a point of reference for future researchers interested in the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse populations in empirical research.

In looking at the empirical research, it is evident that an operational definition of parental involvement was not clearly delineated in the qualitative studies analyzed. To make accurate comparisons and understand the importance of parental involvement, it is necessary to define the concept explicitly and demonstrate how it fits into the dynamics of existing broader constructs.

Given the current paucity of research, we contend that researchers overemphasize the involvement of African American parents from low SES backgrounds. Consequently, the characteristics ascribed to low-income African American parents may be indiscriminately ascribed to all African American parents of children with disabilities. This oversight ignores the intragroup differences that need to be recognized within the African American community. We recommend that future research include African American parents from varied socioeconomic groups to investigate their level of participation in their children's special education program.

Similarly, the data collection and analysis of studies of African American parents of children with disabilities lack variability. There is a need to examine research using alternative inquiry techniques that integrate quantitative and qualitative methodology. Based on the analyses of the four

qualitative studies reviewed, there appears to be a need for designs that focus on sociocultural variables and account for the misinterpretations that might take place due to the lack of awareness of particular cultures.

A broad definition of qualitative studies was used to include all qualitative methods of evaluation provided in the literature review. However, it is not our intention to suggest that qualitative inquiry is a monolithic construct. On the contrary, among numerous possibilities to collect and analyze data, a critical component is missing. We believe that it would be helpful for researchers to share the specific paradigm that fuels the methodology of their research (e.g., interpretivistic, constructivistic). This valuable information would be insightful and might clarify any decisions made by the researcher in relation to the creation, evolution, or implementation of a study.

For the purpose of trustworthiness, it is imperative that researchers include the necessary tenets of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These components are necessary to provide future investigators with the knowledge to replicate or extend empirical research. We feel that it is essential to incorporate a detailed, thick description, including procedures that illustrate how the sample was selected in the study. Without this information, researchers are not able to conduct research employing effective, comprehensive procedures. Techniques such as triangulation, keeping a reflexive journal, and using confirmability audits were not included in all of the reviewed studies. However, it is understood that components of trustworthiness may have been excluded due to limited space in the journals.

Conclusion

This study identified and addressed the quantity, quality, and form of research regarding African American parental involvement in their children's special education programs. We provided evidence to support the justification for additional and improved research. It is evident that there is a need for enhanced empirical research to investigate ways to increase the participation of African American parents of children with disabilities. In tandem, research can inform the practices of preservice and inservice teachers who work with African American children with disabilities and their families. Responding effectively to the needs of African American parents and understanding their differences will enhance the success of their children with disabilities and increase their participation in educational processes.

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EFFECTS OF FAILURE FREE READING ON CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Reading problems are among the most prevalent concerns for general and special educators who teach culturally and linguistically diverse students with learning disabilities. In this study, 60 students with serious reading problems were taught word recognition and comprehension skills using the Failure Free Reading Program. This intervention is based on effective teaching principles identified in successful reading programs. Key steps in the program included (a) previewing the story, (b) listening to the story being read, (c) presenting content from the story, (d) reading the story, and (e) reviewing the story. Improved performance in letter and word identification, word attack skills, reading comprehension, and dictation were observed after intensive intervention procedures were implemented. The results showed that discrepancies between intellectual ability and reading achievement decreased in more than half of the students. Discussion is focused on the implications of the Failure Free Reading Program as an effective intervention program for improving the reading achievement levels of ethnically diverse students with learning disabilities.

Reading is fundamental to success in our society (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The ability to read is highly valued and essential for academic, social, and economic advancement. As a result of positive efforts made by educational practitioners, most children are learning to read fairly well. However, in many schools today, large numbers of students are educationally at risk, rarely performing at the same level as their more advantaged peers. Culturally and linguistically diverse learners who are at risk meet serious problems in the educational system. They are more likely to (a) experience continuous academic failure, (b) be referred and placed in special education programs and lower track classes, and (c) drop out of high school (Winzer & Mazurek, 1998). In this article, we address problems of children whose educational careers are in danger because they do not read well enough to succeed in school, including about 80% of students with learning disabilities who have difficulty reading (Kirk & Elkins, 1975; Lerner, 1997; Lyon, 1985; Snow et al., 1998; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1995; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000).

When questions arise about how best to teach early reading skills to culturally and linguistically diverse children, the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow et al., 1998), suggested (a) using reading to obtain meaning from print; (b) having frequent and

intensive opportunities to read; (c) being exposed to frequent, regular spelling–sound relationships; (d) learning about the nature of the alphabetic writing system; and (e) understanding the structure of spoken words. Furthermore, this Committee pointed out that adequate progress in learning to read beyond initial levels depends on the following factors:

- a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically,
- sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of text,
- sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting,
- control over procedures for monitoring comprehension and repairing misunderstandings, and
- continued interest and motivation to read for a variety of purposes. (pp. 3–4)

Efforts to improve reading and literacy skills also must avoid some pitfalls to be effective:

> There are three potential stumbling blocks that are known to throw children off course on the journey to skilled reading. The first obstacle, which arises at the outset of reading acquisition, is difficulty understanding and using the alphabetic principle—the idea that written spellings systematically represent spoken words. It is hard to comprehend connected text if word recognition is inaccurate or laborious. The second obstacle is a failure to transfer the comprehension skills of spoken language to reading and to acquire new strategies that may be specifically needed for reading. The third obstacle to reading will magnify the first two: the absence or loss of an initial motivation to read or failure to develop a mature appreciation of the rewards of reading. (Snow et al., 1998, pp. 4–5)

Most literacy scholars and the latest "Blue Ribbon Panel" (i.e., the National Reading Panel) agree that the majority of reading problems faced by adolescents and young adults are the result of stumbling blocks, obstacles, and problems that should have been addressed during early elementary school years (cf. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000a, 2000b). Clearly, focusing on a few fundamental factors while avoiding challenges inherent in and/or created by faulty literacy instruction makes the most sense as a method for overcoming reading problems of at-risk students, especially those from diverse backgrounds (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000a, 2000b; Snow et al., 1998; Winzer & Mazurek, 1998).

The program evaluated in this study is grounded in much of the research on effective reading instruction and tutorial programs (cf. Lerner, 1997; Lockavitch, 2001; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000a, 2000b; Snow et al., 1998; Torgesen, 1995; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Its primary goal is to provide a basic understanding of reading to nonreaders and those with pronounced reading difficulty by employing age-appropriate materials, promoting independence in reading, and using a consistent approach with repetition and immediate performance feedback. The program controls three factors critical for reading progress: repetition and practice within a meaningful context, easy and predictable sentence structures, and meaningful story content. As Vadasy, Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, and O'Connor (1997) indicated, some of these strategies have been incorporated in one-to-one tutoring programs that are being used to prevent reading failure, such as Reading Recovery (Clay, 1985) and Success for All (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996). These approaches vary in their emphasis on decoding strategies and reading of connected text, skills essential in programs for nonreaders and those with extremely low reading ability (Snow et al, 1998; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Furthermore, because of their high cost, programs like Reading Recovery and Success for All that are delivered by specially trained and certified teachers are available to only a small portion of elementary school students needing supplemental literacy instruction.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effects of a commercially available intensive remedial intervention, Failure Free Reading, on the reading performance of at-risk students, including those from culturally and linguistically

diverse backgrounds. The approach was selected because it offered several advantages over other special methods typically used with students at risk of continuing and serious failure (e.g., Reading Recovery, Success for All). The program was designed for nonreaders and those with extremely low reading scores (e.g., number of words known ranges from 2 to 50, consistent performance below 50th percentile). For example, in this research, all students reading below the 25th percentile were included, and students were not excluded or rejected based on performance during initial lessons. Failure Free Reading was designed for small-group instruction of children with the lowest reading levels using principles grounded in best practices in preventing difficulties while providing effective literacy instruction (cf. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000a, 2000b). Success rates with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations are favorable (Lockavitch, 2001). The investigators sought to answer the following question: To what extent is Failure Free Reading an effective reading program with culturally and linguistically diverse students at serious risk of continued reading failure?

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

A total of 60 students from a suburban school district in a southwestern state participated in this study. No students dropped out or were removed from the study (i.e., the attrition rate was 0%). Culturally and linguistically diverse students with learning disabilities were taught reading using the Failure Free Reading program to complement general education classroom instruction for an entire school year. The students were randomly selected from among the lowest reading students in several elementary schools to participate in this study. The gender ratio was approximately even, with boys representing 53% of the sample. Approximately two thirds (63%) of the students were White, 20% were Black, 15% were Hispanic, and 2% were Asian. Approximately 37% appear to come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Each student participated in third-, fourth-, or fifth-grade special education programming, and was reading 2 or more years below grade placement. The specified area of discrepancy for the participating students was reading. To participate in the program, each student's intelligence had to fall in the average range; no differences were indicated between IQ scores or reading discrepancies for students from majority or minority backgrounds. Pretest/posttest comparisons of reading achievement and ability-achievement discrepancies were completed to evaluate the effects of the supplemental reading program on these culturally and linguistically diverse learners with learning disabilities (see Table 1).

The total school enrollment in the school district was approximately 30,000 (24th largest in the state) in 18 elementary campuses, 6 intermediate schools (grades 6–8), and 3 comprehensive high schools. Approximately 12% of the students in the district received some type of special education service, including speech and language therapy, coteaching classes, resource room arrangements, helping teacher programs, vocational preparation opportunities, self-contained classes, collaborative approaches, alternative education classes, homebound services, and supported language development classes. Students with learning disabilities represented 52% of the special education population; eligibility criteria defined in Section 89.234 of the *State Board of Education Rules for Special Education* (relating to Learning Disabilities: Criteria for Determining the Existence of a Severe Discrepancy) were typical of those used across the country:

> (a) The multidisciplinary assessment team shall determine whether a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability exists in accordance with the provisions in 34 Code of Federal Regulations §§300.540-300-542.
>
> (b) The team shall determine the student's intellectual ability based on standardized intelligence tests, and shall determine the student's achievement level based on standardized achievement tests in areas

TABLE 1

PARTICIPANTS' INTELLECTUAL ABILITY, READING DISCREPANCY SCORES, AND READING ACHIEVEMENT SCORES

Score		*Group*	
		White	*Ethically Diverse Students*
WISC Full Scale	*M*	93.61	88.95
	SD	17.56	6.18
WISC Full Scale-Reading Discrepancy	*M*	7.97	6.64
	SD	17.48	15.97
Letter Word Identification (%ile)	*M*	28.18	22.00
	SD	23.36	26.53
Letter Word Identification (Standard Score)	*M*	85.66	82.77
	SD	20.11	16.61
Word Attack (%ile)	*M*	27.21	21.91
	SD	23.52	21.24
Word Attack (Standard Score)	*M*	85.89	84.64
	SD	19.21	13.26
Comprehension (%ile)	*M*	29.55	15.27
	SD	25.03	20.82
Comprehension (Standard Score)	*M*	84.73	78.59
	SD	23.94	13.66
Dictation (%ile)	*M*	26.84	17.77
	SD	20.33	18.49
Dictation (Standard Score)	*M*	86.26	83.27
	SD	18.27	10.82

Note. *Discrepancy represents difference between IQ scores and average Standard Scores across subtests of the Woodcock-Johnson. Participating students were in third, fourth, and fifth grades.*
M = *Mean;* SD = *Standard Deviation.*

in which the student has had appropriate learning experiences. The two sets of standardized scores shall be compared. The team shall find that a severe discrepancy exists when the students' assessed intellectual ability is above the mentally retarded range, but where the student's assessed educational achievement in areas specified is more than one standard deviation below the student's intellectual ability. The team's report shall include a statement of the degree of discrepancy and the method of computation used in determining the severe discrepancy.

Participants were combined for all subsequent analyses and treated as at-risk students, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Overall, the sample demonstrated

average intellectual ability, and reading discrepancies were substantial (i.e., more than one-half standard deviation difference). As a measure of severity in learning disabilities in participating students, discrepancies between average reading achievement Standard Scores and WISC-R Full Scale IQ Scores were calculated (WISC-R Verbal and Performance Scores were not available for analysis). At the beginning of the study, 27% of the students exhibited severe (i.e., greater than one standard deviation) discrepancies between ability and achievement (i.e., average reading performance).

Procedures

The Failure Free Reading program was developed to give students with severe reading difficulties the opportunity to immediately experience success (Lockavitch, 2001). The materials were specifically designed to allow teachers to place nonreading students in age- and grade-appropriate reading passages regardless of current levels of reading performance. The product includes a teacher's manual with scripted lessons and instructional readers and independent reading booklets at varying levels of difficulty, as well as flashcards and independent reading activities for additional practice. Talking software is also available. The program controls and emphasizes three elements crucial to reading success: repetition, sentence structure, and story content. Lessons in Failure Free Reading (a) provide high rates of vocabulary repetition in sentences that are not complicated with inverted phrases and (b) control dependent clauses, or incomplete thoughts that confuse and frustrate emergent readers. The program content also controls the use of multiple-meaning words, figurative speech, and complex language in the content of each reading passage.

Culturally and linguistically diverse students with learning disabilities participated in a maximum instructional period of 30 minutes each day of the week with a teacher trained in Failure Free Reading. The special instruction was provided in a separate reading laboratory by a teacher who was taught to use the program in a series of inservice workshops. Although the program provides both printed material and computer software, this particular sample was instructed using printed material only. The approach reduced reading to its simplest form by controlling for context of the material, sentence structure, and story content. The primary instructional procedure involved (a) previewing material to be read; (b) listening to the teacher read; (c) answering factual, inferential, and leading questions; (d) reading the material; and (e) reviewing the material successfully. While these activities are often included in classroom reading instruction, their simultaneous application within a structured remedial program was a unique intervention for this group of students. The approach was designed to improve word recognition and comprehension performance by having students read controlled passages from a carefully scripted commercial program.

A typical 30-minute session included the following literacy activities:

1. *A teacher-led preteaching oral language lesson (5–10 minutes).* The teacher previews material within a structured instructional lesson that sets the stage for the students with a brief discussion of the story to follow (e.g., "Today we are going to continue reading our story about going to the park. Who would like to tell me what we have already read?") and other context-based activities. This lesson has a strong language development component, including introduction and explanation of new vocabulary as well as review of previous words. The oral language lesson also includes factual, inferential, and prediction comprehension questions. Factual questions cover specific story content to ensure that students comprehend all aspects of the story, including vocabulary and theme. Inferential and leading questions are used to increase students' abilities to make meaningful context-based decisions and predictions.

   This lesson was used to (a) show how sounds are represented alphabetically, (b) provide background knowledge and vocabulary to render written text meaningful and interesting, (c) illustrate the use of reading to obtain meaning from print, (d) teach the

nature of the alphabetic writing system, and (e) foster understanding of the structure of spoken words by relating material being read to a meaningful context. These are skills identified as critical to reversing the devastating effects of reading failure in young children.

2. *A teacher-led guided instructional reading lesson (10–15 minutes).* The teacher engages students in instructional activities using targeted words, phrases, and sentences. Supervised oral reading practice is included, and cloze activities using single words and phrases (e.g., I am going to the ____.), scrambled sentence activities (e.g., going am park I the to), matching activities (e.g., I am going to the [store park school].), and other, similar reading recognition tasks are completed with the teacher providing supportive and corrective feedback. Actual reading passages are designed to increase competence and confidence through increments in content. For example, a student starts reading a brief phrase or sentence (e.g., Today we went to the park.). Each following sentence extends each preceding sentence (e.g., Today we went to the park with mother.), providing multiple occasions for practice. Frequent, intensive opportunities to read, as well as high rates of fluency and supervised engagement within the context of vocabulary-controlled, high-interest reading materials, were the targets of this aspect of the program. Experts in reading include these skills as essential to remedial programs.

3. *An independent print-based practice lesson (10–15 minutes).* Pencil and paper activities similar to those used during the guided instructional activities (e.g., cloze, scrambled sentence, matching activities) are used to reinforce each lesson and provide practice in reading text presented in different formats. Spelling activities are also included to reinforce relationships between reading and writing as well as provide additional exposure to sound–symbol relationships and provide opportunities for monitoring progress. Again, these skills are widely recognized as essential in comprehensive reading improvement programs.

The students entered the program in September and were pretested using the Wechsler Intelligence Test for Children-Revised and the following Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement (1977 version) subtests: Letter Word Identification, Word Attack, Reading Comprehension, and Dictation. At the end of the school year, the students were retested using the same four subtests. Progress in the program was monitored using a series of curriculum-based assessments. At the end of the school year, comparisons of reading performance and ability-achievement discrepancies were completed; the level of significance for all statistical tests was 0.01.

Results

Posttest reading ability and pretest/posttest achievement standard score comparisons are presented in Table 2. Average grade equivalent improvement of 9 to 18 months was evident in posttest reading ability scores. Pretest/posttest comparisons of standard score improvements were significant ($p < 0.01$) on each reading subtest except Dictation; improvements were greater than one-half standard deviation unit for the sample in each area. Letter Word Identification improved 6 points (7%), Word Attack improved 8 points (9%), and Comprehension improved 11 points (13%). As illustrated in Center, Wheldall, Freeman, Outhred, and McNaught (1995), the magnitude of these differences was comparable to that resulting from implementations of a large-scale remedial intervention (i.e., Reading Recovery).

Pretest/posttest discrepancy analyses are presented in Table 3. Reductions in discrepancies between ability (WISC-R Full Scale) and reading achievement were significant ($p < 0.01$) in all areas evaluated except Dictation. Decreases in Word Attack and Comprehension subtest discrepancies were most substantial. In all cases, average posttest discrepancies were less than one standard deviation different and most were a one-half standard deviation unit or lower. At the conclusion of the study, 17% of the students exhibited severe

TABLE 2

POSTTEST READING ABILITY AND PRETEST/POSTTEST ACHIEVEMENT STANDARD SCORE COMPARISONS

Reading Ability Subtest		*Percentile*	*Grade Equivalent*	*Standard Score*
Letter Word Identification	*M*	33.48	3.32	90.60
	SD	27.30	1.74	15.18
Word Attack	*M*	38.42	3.39	93.32
	SD	28.19	2.67	15.75
Comprehension	*M*	37.20	3.65	93.22
	SD	28.38	2.06	15.54
Dictation	*M*	32.17	3.19	88.10
	SD	25.95	1.52	17.37

Reading Ability Subtest		*Pretest*	*Posttest*	*Obtained t*
Letter Word Identification	*M*	84.60	90.60	–3.68*
	SD	18.81	15.18	
Word Attack	*M*	85.43	93.32	–4.85*
	SD	17.15	15.75	
Comprehension	*M*	82.48	93.22	–5.89*
	SD	20.85	15.54	
Dictation	*M*	85.17	88.10	–1.51
	SD	15.91	17.37	

M = *Mean;* SD = *Standard Deviation.*
*$p < 0.01$

discrepancies in reading achievement (i.e., average reading performance); this represented greater than a 50% drop from the beginning of the school year in the number of students exhibiting this level of discrepancy. More specifically, Letter/Word Identification posttest discrepancies were equal to or lower than pretest discrepancies for 77% of the students; Word Attack posttest discrepancies were equal to or lower than pretest discrepancies for 80% of the students; Comprehension posttest discrepancies were equal to or lower than pretest discrepancies for 87% of the students; and Dictation posttest discrepancies were equal to or lower than pretest discrepancies for 70% of the students.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of a structured program designed to improve the reading achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse elementary school students who were at risk of serious reading failure. The results demonstrated significant improvements in reading performance as an academic outcome of this intervention. In terms of overall magnitude, reading improvements were comparable to those reported for large-scale preventive early intervention programs designed to accelerate the progress of young readers who have failed to profit from reading instruction (cf. Center et al., 1995).

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TABLE 3

PRETEST/POSTTEST DISCREPANCY COMPARISONS

Subtest/Discrepancy		*Pretest*	*Posttest*	*Obtained t*
Letter Word Identification/	*M*	21.52	16.40	2.98*
WISC Full Scale	*SD*	13.59	10.88	
Word Attack/	*M*	6.47	−1.42	4.85*
WISC Full Scale	*SD*	17.54	16.55	
Comprehension/	*M*	9.42	−1.32	5.89*
WISC Full Scale	*SD*	20.42	16.54	
Dictation/	*M*	6.73	3.80	1.51
WISC Full Scale	*SD*	15.63	18.34	

M = *Mean;* SD = *Standard Deviation.*
*p < *0.01*

One common element in most definitions of learning disabilities is the identification of a gap between what students are capable of learning and what they have actually learned (Lerner, 1997). This discrepancy is highlighted in the operational subsections of guidelines for identifying students with learning disabilities in most states (Frankenberger & Fronzaglio, 1991). In this study, the number of students with severe discrepancies in reading decreased more than 50% after students participated in a structured remedial program.

As Torgesen (1995) pointed out, professional knowledge of word-level reading problems has three implications for instruction. First, a body of research suggests that children at risk for school failure need early, direct instruction in alphabetic reading skills. Second, these students need direct instruction in integrating phonological skills in context to practice finding the correct pronunciation of words. Third, students who are at risk need instruction in phonological awareness prior to, or simultaneous with, phonics and connected text reading. These implications are evident in the seminal work of the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow et al., 1998) and are also evident in the intervention evaluated in this study.

Poor reading skills have been blamed for many of society's ills (e.g., chronic unemployment, dropping out of school, juvenile delinquency; Kirk & Elkins, 1975; Lerner, 1997; Lyon, 1985; Snow et al., 1998). It is apparent that many students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are at continuing risk for reading failure (Winzer & Mazurek, 1998). Improving reading performance has been a continuing area of focus in efforts to meet the needs of these learners as well as in the commitment of schools to see that all students learn basic skills (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000a, 2000b; Snow et al., 1998; Wasik & Slavin, 1993; Wood & Algozzine, 1995).

Limitation

A major limitation of this study was the absence of a control group for comparison; however, as we indicated in our earlier work, the effects of this omission are minimized by results of previous

research. For example, in earlier research, O'Shea and Valcante (1986) compared the stability of discrepancies between ability and achievement for students with learning disabilities and their low-achieving peers. The performance level of students with learning disabilities was approximately at grade level in second grade, but it was almost 2 years below grade level in fifth grade. Reading discrepancy scores for students with learning disabilities and their low-achieving peers were similar in second grade but different by fifth grade. Discrepancies for both groups were 34% *higher* in fifth grade compared to second grade. Improvements in reading achievement in the current study resulted in significant *reductions* in discrepancies between intellectual ability and reading performance scores. In many cases, students with learning disabilities who previously met eligibility criteria were no longer qualified for special education services.

Research-to-Practice Issues

Recent research examining the instructional practices that support literacy in culturally and linguistically diverse students with learning disabilities highlights the importance of interactive learning that is print-rich and incorporates a variety of materials and activities. Failure Free Reading engages students in active literacy experiences and controls three factors critical for reading progress: repetition and practice within a meaningful context, using easy and predictable sentence structures, and meaningful story content. It is grounded in a set of fundamental beliefs:

- America's schools are full of students who have failed to learn to read at acceptable levels based on their age and grade. Target students for this program are the lowest-performing of these readers. No students are excluded and all students, regardless of current reading level, are welcomed.
- Over the years, many theories regarding the cause(s) of reading failure have been popular. Knowledge about reasons for previous failure and/or the extent of it are not critical to success in this program. Students with all personal, cultural, educational, and instructional histories are welcomed.
- A critical factor for success in reading is having sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting. In this program, students move quickly into meaningful connected text to experience reading at age-appropriate levels.
- Reading success is highly related to repetition. (Some low readers require 50 to 100 repetitions before recognizing some words.) Good readers have had sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of text. High rates of structured practice in reading predictable content in controlled sentences are a hallmark of this program.
- A stumbling block to reading success is a failure to transfer the comprehension skills of spoken language to reading and to acquire new strategies that may be specifically needed for reading. In this program, students practice comprehension as well as word recognition.

Conclusion

Over the years, reading improvement bandwagons have come and gone. At times, debate over their value has achieved monumental proportion (e.g., phonics vs. whole language) with little left after all the rhetoric has cleared but the expected swing of the pendulum (cf. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000a, 2000b; Snow et al., 1998; Winzer & Mazurek, 1998). Failure Free Reading has had the same goal for more than 15 years: Provide a basic understanding of the reading process to nonreaders and those with pronounced reading difficulty by employing age-appropriate materials, promoting independence in reading, and using a consistent approach with repetition and immediate performance feedback (Lockavitch, 2001). It appears, at least as a result of the positive outcomes of this research, that the program is working.

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NATIVE AMERICANS AND AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Professional sensitivity to cultural issues during augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) design and implementation has gained increasing attention in the professional literature. This article describes four cultural domains in which core values characteristic of Native American tribes are discernable: spirituality, trustworthiness, family, and communicative variables. Implications of AAC for practitioners are noted in each of these domains, followed by a description of the results of an ethnographic study investigating the real experience of implementing AAC for two Native American students, their families, and their educational teams. Field observations; videotapes of use of voice output communication aids; and interviews with AAC users, their family members, and educational teams provide data for examination. These data support a grounded theory describing the experience of Native American AAC users who are still missing a key element related to Native American culture.

Speech and language pathologists and other related services personnel increasingly acknowledge the growing need for use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems with culturally diverse populations (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1996; Blackstone, 1993; Hetzroni & Harris, 1996; Parette, Brotherson, Hoge, & Hostetler, 1996; Soto, Huer, & Taylor, 1997; Taylor & Clarke, 1994). An AAC system is an "integrated group of components, including the symbols, aids, strategies, and techniques used by individuals to enhance communication" (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1991, p. 10). Frequently used aids include low-tech (e.g., communication boards, notebooks) and high-tech (i.e., electronic) devices. Of particular importance are electronic AAC devices that use synthetic or digitized speech output, allowing children with disabilities to communicate with their families and individuals in school and community settings.

The AAC assessment paradigm currently employed in the United States has developed from the perspectives and value system of Euro American individuals (Blackstone, 1993; Hetzroni, & Harris, 1996). This paradigm has been characterized by an emphasis on the user of assistive technology, device features, and service system concerns, with less emphasis placed on family and cultural factors (Parette, 1995). More recently, other models have been proposed that address communication competence (Light, 1989) and participation models (Beukelman & Mirenda, 1992). These, too, fail to emphasize the importance of family and cultural influences in AAC decision making.

Best practices in service approaches in speech and language pathology and other related services disciplines suggest that professionals should no longer focus on just the child and his or her disability. A more holistic approach to assessment and intervention is necessary if professionals are

to effectively serve the wide range of children and families who make up our diverse society. This involves expanding the view of the child to include background language, cultural differences, and experiences (Harris, 1993). Thus, the AAC professional has a responsibility to learn about the cultural views and communication styles of children and families from various cultures and develop an awareness of the implications of diversity for AAC service delivery.

Problems with the focus of the traditional (i.e., Euro American) AAC assessment paradigm have been reflected in family interviews and focus group "conversations" with families from non-Euro American cultural groups (Parette & VanBiervliet, 1999). Through qualitative investigation, a range of family and cultural issues have been identified as traditionally ignored or de-emphasized in AAC decision making. The traditional AAC assessment paradigm may be especially inadequate when applied to Native Americans.

Native American Demographic

Although the Native American population comprises less than 1% of the U.S. population (Conroy, 1995), this ethnic group has a higher incidence of disability (21.9%) than any other in the United States (Bradsher, 1996). An early study conducted by Rameriz and Johnson (as cited in Harris, 1993) revealed that between 1978 and 1986 the number of American Indian elementary and secondary school students enrolled in special education programs rose 41.8%. Of the approximately 37,000 Native American students receiving special education services, almost 80% were diagnosed with a learning disability or speech-language impairment. This figure represents a 60% increase in those who were categorized as having learning disabilities and a 50% increase in those identified as having speech-language impairments during this 8-year period.

The increasing number of Native American children with disabilities reinforces the need for professionals involved in AAC decision making to be aware of cultural differences and the various value systems in order to serve families from diverse backgrounds. Without sensitivity to cultural differences, the outlook for developing effective relationships with family members is grim (Baruth & Manning, 1992; Battle, 1993).

Cultural Issues and Native Americans

An examination of the literature regarding the various Native American tribes reveals, unsurprisingly, a range of diversity and values. Each tribe has distinct variations based on its own history, culture, and language. Thus, practitioners must exercise great caution to avoid stereotyping when discussing groups of Native American individuals. However, the literature indicates that the majority of the Native American tribes do share core beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, which serve as a basic foundation for Native American social order (Soldier, 1992).

Social order in Native American tribes is maintained by strict adherence to a uniform value system, which includes spirituality, trustworthiness, wisdom of age, respect, peace, humility, family, and new traditions (Conroy, 1995). Designing a plan for obtaining specific information for AAC system development requires awareness and sensitivity to such general cultural characteristics of Native Americans. Important areas for consideration are discussed in the following sections, with implications for AAC practitioners.

Spirituality

The spiritual side of the Native American culture is based on the belief that religion is not a separate entity from daily life. From this perspective, the deity *Creator*—around which all spiritual beliefs revolve—has granted all living creatures *equal rights* (Harris, 1993). Through this God-given life, all living things are related to one another.

For the American Indian, there is also a significant relationship between spiritual beliefs and the health and disabilities of tribal members. Children with disabilities are often accepted as a gift from God (Anderson & Fenichel, 1989; Harris, 1993). It is commonly believed that things happen for a reason; there are no accidents. Examples of rea-

sons for disabilities frequently articulated by Native Americans are that (a) disabilities are the fault of someone in the tribe, (b) it was the choice of the child as to how to be born, and (c) it was the Creator's choice to give disability to this person, family, or tribe. It is, therefore, not surprising that frequently Native American families accept a child with a disability into the family with a wider range of tolerance than families from other ethnicities (Harris, 1993). To reject a child with a disability may be to reject a gift from the Supreme Creator.

AAC implications. Implications of spiritual beliefs have the potential to affect several aspects of AAC system design, beginning with the overall approach of dealing with disability. Families may believe that no intervention is best, that to do *rehabilitation* is against the acceptance of what God gave. If families choose to make an effort at changing the situation, they may be more comfortable with healing ceremonies than with the traditional rehabilitation approaches. Some families may decide to employ both approaches but have a need to keep these separate. If families employ tribal healing ceremonies, it is important for professionals in AAC to respect privacy boundaries and not seek information regarding that type of intervention unless the family volunteers it (Joe & Malach, 1992). However, it is appropriate to ask for direction related to aspects of spirituality that affect AAC system design. For example, when making a symbol display, it is important to consider the emphasis on balance and harmony and to choose colors and symbols that respect and reflect Native Americans' special relationship with nature.

Trustworthiness

Trust is also a very important issue in Native American culture. Just as the changes in the natural environment are reliable year after year, so are the relationships sought among Native Americans (Conroy, 1995). Professionals must recognize that this process does not occur simply based upon their *position* or *expertise*. Native American families must develop a perception of the professional before a trusting relationship can be established. This requires flexibility and may take a long time—possibly years. It is extremely important to take time to work effectively with families, thereby supporting the process of developing a trusting relationship.

AAC implications. To work effectively with Native American families when developing AAC systems, professionals must adapt more flexible work schedules. This means that the usual rhythm of clinical work may need to be adjusted. Daily schedules may need to be longer and assessments may need to take place at more convenient places and times (e.g., other than at school or in the clinic; Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.) (Anderson & Fenichel, 1989).

Family

Family is a dominant part of Native American culture, with a unique composition, perspective, and function. Each individual is considered as part of the tribe, and the efforts of the individual reflect on the tribe as a whole (Harris, 1993). Traditionally, Native American family structure includes the extended family as well as immediate family members. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins are often included in the family constellations (Harris, 1993). Older family members are believed to possess a great deal of knowledge gained through their life experiences. Their opinion is valued by younger generations (Lynch & Hanson, 1992).

The responsibility of raising Native American children is often assumed by a number of different relatives who serve specific functions. The paternal uncle or maternal aunt may be given the responsibility of raising the child, while the grandparents provide the child with spiritual guidance and teaching. The child may live with these relatives while the child's parents remain employed or have the responsibility of raising other children in the extended family (Haase, 1995; Harris, 1993).

AAC implications. Family members must consider aspects of system design from the perspective

of its acceptance and reflection on the tribe as a whole. The AAC system designer should direct communication to the entire group and respond to their concerns and feelings. Since the parents may seek advice from elders during the decision-making process in meetings, it is important that AAC system designers ask the parents whom they want to include in meetings. It should not be assumed that all members of the extended family attending will participate in the decision-making process, but all should be welcome and their input respected (Joe & Malach, 1992).

Communicative Variables

Native Americans often share a perspective on communication that reflects spiritual applications to daily living. It is a common belief that the spoken word holds truth, honor, and the power of life—that is, to heal or to harm. Therefore, words must be chosen carefully and used wisely (Harris, 1993). These ideas appear to be reflected in communicative styles frequently observed among Native Americans.

Many Native Americans engage in conversation only when they determine that their contribution is exceptionally worthwhile (Alper, Schloss, & Schloss, 1994). Silence is often used as a way of showing respect and being polite. For example, as a sign of respect for the activities in motion within a room, greetings often are not used when entering or leaving (Harris, 1993).

Within conversational exchange, Native Americans often do not provide information in a linear (i.e., question/answer) form. Instead, response to a direct question is given in a story form that weaves the requested information into a total picture of the speaker's perceptions. Communication occurs not only through careful choice of words, with long pauses, but also through a sophisticated process of subtle eye movement, body language, and tone of voice (Alper et al., 1994).

AAC implications. Over all, for effective information gathering to occur, the AAC system designer should adopt a communicative style compatible with and respectful of that of the Native American culture. This may require particular attention to choice of words and phrases, asking questions in a general, facilitative manner, and speaking in a slow, quiet manner. At times it may also require maintaining silence and slower turn taking in conversation.

Needs for Research

While the general AAC implications just mentioned have broad theoretical applicability to the large ethnic group of Native Americans, there is a need to explore the actual experiences of specific Native American AAC users and their families. Presently there is no literature available that can specifically describe the way in which Native American cultural considerations have or have not been included in the design and implementation of AAC. It is also important to have information regarding the personal responses of Native Americans to the use of AAC systems. Toward this end, we designed a study to gather information from AAC users and their families who are members of the Navajo tribe and from the teams of AAC service providers, all living in Shiprock, New Mexico. The goals of this study were to (a) gather information regarding the ways in which an AAC device has affected the child and family, (b) identify issues related to the use of AAC, and (c) identify experiences and patterns specifically related to Native American culture. Specific queries included the following:

1. What are perceived as the positive and the negative aspects of the experience of a Navajo student using an AAC device?
2. What do the AAC user, family, and educational staff wish were different about the ways this system has been implemented?
3. What things does the family think are important to tell potential AAC users and families who are considering the use of AAC?

Research Design

A qualitative research design provided the investigative infrastructure. This project was a compo-

nent of a much larger information-gathering effort to examine AAC concerns across five different cultural groups (Parette et al., 1996). However, the particular qualitative research used in gathering information from the Navajo incorporated many of the specific cultural considerations discussed in the introduction of this article. Details of these aspects will be included within the description of the methodology.

METHOD

SETTINGS AND PARTICIPANTS

This part of the study reflects the themes of trustworthiness and communication variables. The element of trustworthiness is illustrated by the self-selection of participants. Navajo families were invited to participate in the study if they were parents or primary caregivers of children who presently used an AAC device or if they had been evaluated for a device but had not yet received one. Two families of children who presently used AAC devices agreed to participate and indicated that their willingness was based upon trust developed through an ongoing relationship with the first author (Stuart, 1999c, 1999d).

Over the course of the previous 5-year period, she had provided specialized assessments and had spent many hours meeting with these families, designing AAC systems, and gathering information related to Navajo messaging. In discussions regarding the logistics of conducting the interviews, the families further indicated a desire to have the educational staff included as participants. They expressed the belief that we must obtain information about the child's entire experience using AAC and could only do so if all the people who were involved with the child in the experience of using an AAC system were given an opportunity to describe the experience from their perspective. They further expressed the view that these people represented the child's *AAC family* (in keeping with the traditional Native American perspective of family structure, which includes the extended family and considers individuals from the perspective of the tribe as a whole).

The researchers felt that it was important to show respect by honoring this perspective, thereby also maintaining the ongoing level of trust. Therefore, a total of four data-gathering sessions were held—one with each of the two immediate families and one with each of the two *extended AAC families,* persons from the school who were involved with the children's use of the AAC system. Table 1 summarizes descriptive data for each of the 15 participants. Some detailed information regarding the AAC users follows.

AAC User D is an 11-year-old girl. She consistently lives with her mother. Other members of the household vary (some siblings are always present, but the numbers shift; the father and grandparent[s] are inconsistently present). User D's mother is bilingual; both English and Navajo being used at home. D attends fourth grade, where instruction is in English with the option of receiving special instruction in Navajo. She has been diagnosed with moderate, spastic, quadriplegic cerebral palsy. D uses a power wheelchair for mobility and direct access with a Liberator voice output communication aid.

AAC user N is a 16-year-old boy. He consistently lives with his mother and 14-year-old brother, M. Other members of the household (i.e., father, aunts, uncles, cousins) vary. N's mother speaks only Navajo, and that is the only language spoken in the home. When N's mother needs to interact with English speakers, she engages in the common custom of using available bilingual relatives (usually M or her sister) as translators. In his early elementary school years, N attended a residential school for children with special needs, out of state, but he has attended junior and senior high school at the local schools, where all instruction is in English with the option of receiving special instruction in Navajo. He was a junior in high school at the time of this study. N has been diagnosed with severe, mixed athetoid-spastic, quadriplegic cerebral palsy. He uses a power wheelchair for mobility and direct select with a head pointer access to a Words+ voice output communication aid.

According to the original ethnographic protocol for this grant, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire consisting of 18 inquiries with response options "yes," "no," and "sometimes"

TABLE 1

DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION FOR KEY INFORMANTS

Role/Gender	*Ethnicity*	*Language*	*School Assoc.*
AAC User-F	Navajo	English/Navajo	Elementary
AAC User-M	Navajo	Navajo/English	Senior High
Mother-F	Navajo	Navajo/English	Elementary
Mother-F	Navajo	Navajo	Senior High
Brother-M	Navajo	Navajo/English	Senior High
Aunt-F	Navajo	Navajo/English	Senior High
Teacher (Sp.Ed.)-F	Caucasian	English	Elementary
Asst Tech Spec. -F	Caucasian	English	Sr. Hi / Elem.
Teacher (Reg. Ed)-F	Caucasian	English	Elementary
Speech-Lang.Path-F	Caucasian	English	Elementary
Math Teacher-F	Caucasian	English	Senior High
Teacher (Reg. Ed)-F	Caucasian	English	Senior High
Teacher (Navajo)-F	Navajo	Navajo/English	Senior High
Paraprofessional-F	Navajo	Navajo/English	Elementary
Paraprofessional-M	Navajo	Navajo/English	Senior High

before the interview session. However, limiting responses and requiring completion of written materials is viewed with suspicion by Navajos and considered incompatible with their culture. The first author was aware of the distrust of written documents, since families had shared this information in past discussions regarding other projects, individualized education programs, and so forth. This portion of the interview protocol, developed as part of the larger study (Parette et al., 1996), needed to be customized to be appropriate to the Navajo communication style. Therefore, the written questionnaires were not used.

We determined that the optimum approach was to use facilitative questions that provided opportunities for families to "tell about a topic," usually through a story format. While arranging for the interviews, the first author received permission to take notes during each of the interviews and to make a video recording. This approach was used for all the interviews. The first author conducted the actual interviews, making a conscious effort to reflect awareness of the differences in communicative styles mentioned earlier. In asking questions, she endeavored to incorporate a slow, respectful speech pattern and to ask only one broad question followed by a quiet period of time and waited a longer time before taking another conversational turn.

Another communication variable involved in interacting with the Native American families in this study was the use of native language. Navajo is the language used to a greater or lesser degree within most Navajo homes. During formal processes, especially legal proceedings, official translators who have been officially trained and certified are employed to translate. However, on a day-to-day basis, it is common custom for translation to be provided informally by available bilingual Navajos. Navajo families who have a mem-

ber who speaks only Navajo generally make certain that a bilingual family member is available to translate when interacting with the English-speaking community. This custom also relates to the issue of trustworthiness. It is common knowledge that the comfort and trust level is greatest when family members provide the translation. Therefore, in this study, when translation was needed, it occurred according to common custom, through a family member. This was deemed to offer the optimum possibilities for easy, honest interaction.

Data Collection

Triangulation of research procedures, the essence of a qualitative approach, includes the use of multiple data sources, multiple methods of data collection, and multiple investigators to supply information from many perspectives (Snow & Anderson, 1993). Three strategies were pursued in this regard: direct observation of Navajo students using AAC (with field notes & videotaping); videotaping of students' use of new AAC items; and direct interview (with notes and videotaping) of Navajo families, AAC users, and educational staff.

Observation of Navajo students using AAC. We accomplished this part of data collection through a comingling of the first author's roles of researcher and assistive technology specialist. Many outsiders come to the reservation seeking opportunities to *sell* expertise, gather information to further their careers, and exploit differences. Although they were not indifferent to the needs of a total society (i.e., all children who need AAC or American Indian children who need AAC), these Navajo families needed to know that being involved with a so-called outsider would result in something of value for *their* child. The focus of initial interactions between the first author and the Navajo student AAC users and families was to build rapport and gather information that would lead to recommendations for voice output communication aids. Prior to the actual meetings, the families were provided with information regarding the first author and asked to consider using her services. When they agreed, she requested detailed information regarding the child. This included information about daily routines at home and school; favorite activities; toys; pets; names of family members; and elements of Navajo customs such as greetings, songs, and prayers practiced by the family.

Prior to the interview sessions, the author visited the schools three times for approximately one-half day each. Research observations in the form of field notes were made of the students using their current AAC systems during math class, social studies, and science and as they spontaneously interacted with teachers and students in the hallways and lunchroom.

Videotaping of New AAC. In addition to the observation of current communication system use, the students were provided the opportunity to try several new AAC items that had been customized to reflect elements gleaned from the initial discussion with their families. Symbols had been customized to incorporate designs and colors compatible with Navajo culture (i.e., no inclusion of snakes or owls; special inclusion of horses, familiar landmarks, and "true colors"—yellow, blue, brown, and white).

Several different voice output communication aids were customized with messages designed to allow the students to participate in activities common to their daily routines. This included at least one or two greetings and comments in native Navajo and a unique greeting called "telling your clan." Videotaping of the student interacting with family, other students, and educational staff using these new pieces of AAC equipment was done at that time. The authors reviewed these tapes before making recommendations for specific changes in the student's AAC system and again as part of the data for this project.

Interviews. An additional way of learning about the perceptions and experiences of Navajo AAC users is through direct discussion of this topic with the AAC users themselves and those with whom they regularly converse. Four interviews, using a group format, were conducted to gather this information. The first interview was with D, the 11-year-old elementary school girl and her

mother (Stuart, 1999c), and the second was with D's five educational staff members (i.e., assistive technology specialist, speech-language pathologist, special education teacher, general education teacher, paraprofessional) (Stuart, 1999a) who regularly interact with D throughout her school day. The third interview was with N, the 16-year-old high school boy (Stuart, 1999d), his mother, his 14-year-old brother, and his aunt, who also acted as an interpreter since N's mother does not speak English. The fourth interview was with N's six educational staff members (i.e., assistive technology specialist, speech-language pathologist, math teacher, social studies teacher, science teacher, paraprofessional) (Stuart, 1999b) who regularly interact with N throughout his school day.

To focus discussion, an open-ended questionnaire format was used in the face-to-face interviews. The following general questions were asked:

1. What is your impression (good or bad) of the experience of D (or N) using AAC?
2. How much training have you received regarding the voice output communication aid? How confident are you about working with it?
3. What do you wish were different with the whole process of implementing AAC use and what advice would you offer others?

Data Analysis

Qualitative research employs evaluation of data during and after its collection to determine patterns or trends that then can be viewed collectively to provide a *picture* of the phenomena being studied. This requires continuous data interpretation, focusing on identifying key concepts and relationships among the categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

We used two basic procedures to analyze and interpret the data collected in this study. First, sets of data categories were identified incident by incident to discover patterns. For example, data from observations and interviews revealed information about the perceived value of the AAC system and the process involved in achieving that value. Data reflected many similarities in participants' (i.e., educational staff, AAC user, immediate family members) perceptions of the value of the AAC system and the process and one major area in which the perception of need for additional or different aspects was strikingly different.

The many categories ultimately could be grouped into three major data categories: Quality of Life, Demands/Commitment, and Identity. We then examined the items within each category from an added perspective. For example, we asked questions such as "What is this part within the category?" and "What does it represent?" This analysis process, called *open coding,* resulted in the development of conceptual labels for observed phenomena, such as the word *hurdles* to describe obstacles (e.g., fear of breaking the device, sibling resentments, inconveniences in transporting) encountered in the process of implementing the system.

A second analysis step, called *axial coding,* involved comparing concepts to one another to determine how they were related, and ultimately resulted in defining connections between categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Over all, this continuous data interpretation of identifying key concepts and determining relationships among them results in what is called a *grounded theory* inductively derived from diverse data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The grounded theory is a framework that revealed, in this case, what it was like for a Native American student to use an AAC system.

Results and Discussion

One of the goals of this study was to learn about the way in which an AAC device affected the child and family and aspects related to Native American culture. Patterns reported by interviewees, noted in field observations, and identified in review of videotapes included two general, related categories: Gains and Effort/Commitment (see Figure 1). Within each of these categories additional subcategories were found. The Gains category was found to include the following three subcategories:

1. *Insight:* a better understanding of the child as a person.
2. *Participation:* increased involvement in a variety of activities.
3. *Self-Esteem:* positive responses from the AAC user and listeners.

The Effort/Commitment category was found to include

1. *Learning/Training:* a demand for learning by both the AAC user and family and staff.
2. *Hurdles:* the need to overcome fears, sibling resentments, and logistical obstacles.
3. *Time Demands:* the time needed to set up equipment and perform maintenance and for the AAC user to use it to interact in class.

Patterns in our data also revealed information about the use of Navajo messaging and furthering the AAC user's ability to follow Navajo customs through use of the voice output communication aid. We called this third general category Navajo Language and Message (depicted in Figure 1). Two subcategories comprise this third general category: Plus Navajo and Minus Navajo.

Gains

AAC user D has medium-length black hair, wears glasses, and has a shy smile. She appears small in her power wheelchair with its attached Liberator voice output communication aid. When we first catch sight of her, she is driving her chair—fast—down the hallway and turns into her classroom, quickly flips the cover on her Liberator up, and punches the buttons that result in the message "Good Morning."

AAC user N this day is wearing black jeans and a black broadcloth shirt hand-decorated with some traditional Indian designs. He wears glasses and presents as a studious and friendly person. As he motors from one area to the next in the high school, fellow students and two teachers call out greetings to him. He does not stop, but nods his head and smiles. Upon arrival in the classroom he drives immediately to the area in which he will be assisted in setting up for use of his AAC device. The paraprofessional and N begin the set-up process in a manner that reflects an established routine. Upon finishing, N asks, "So what are we doing today?"

Throughout the several field observations of academic and social interactions, the general impression was one of students in school doing the same things that other students were doing, albeit with a lot of specialized equipment. Viewed from the perspective of someone with a long history of professional involvement with assistive technology, these observations indicated very positive gains. However, these are the observations and impressions of an outsider. The opinions of the AAC users, their families, and staff must also reflect an increased quality of life to support such a conclusion. During each interview the open-ended questions were presented with an emphasis on encouraging the participants to share their honest opinions about the experiences of using AAC. The answers from family and educational staff talked about gains in skills, increased participation, and overall increase in self-esteem. They also reflect a perceived value of AAC to facilitate interpersonal communication and to assist them in knowing the AAC user better. For example, N's mother responded to our question of how the use of AAC had affected their lives as follows:

> Well, um, he went to school there to Huwatchy [North Dakota, where the device was first implemented] and during that time he didn't have any device. So he had to communicate with either a yes or no answer with a nod of the head. Then he had the computer and it make a big difference. It's more like your communicating with him and where he understands you it makes a big difference. (Stuart, 1999d, p. 649)

N's brother offered:

> A lot better to communicate with him. Like my mom said, I was little surprised too. When, well I went to North Dakota with my mom and when we saw him he said, 'hi, how are you?' I was amazed. (Stuart, 1999d, p. 652)

D's mother then indicated:

> Yeah she learned a lot from the Liberator, She knows how to put in words and she reads books with the Liberator, does words with her math. Oh and she sings . . . she sings Christmas songs during the Christmas season. (Stuart, 1999d, p. 645)

This same incident was again referenced in a later interview with Carol, the paraprofessional working with D:

> So then during Christmas when she sang on the Liberator, she sang a song and I felt like that was her. It touched my heart because it was her that was singing and even when we go to music you know she shows talent and it makes you think that she is singing right now. . . . (Stuart, 1999a, p. 269)

Responses from educational staff included not only descriptions of the gains achieved but some also included their personal, emotional responses. D's classroom teacher reported:

> From my point of view, in her regular classroom what I expected "D" to do with the Liberator, was for her to, you know, be able to say "hello Mrs. . . . " or "I need scissors" or "he's bothering me," "I'm done." At first she didn't hardly use it all and now she's using it more and more everyday. So it's nice. She'll say "hello," "goodbye" and she'll say "look at this." But she's using it in society more and more too everyday. (Stuart, 1999a, p. 267)

> She pushed my hands away the other day and she wanted to get on that Liberator. The first time she did that I went "aaa" and then when she wanted to start spelling her own words, . . . and she pushed my hands away—I knew that she was really using that, that was her voice, and that really excited me. (Stuart, 1999a, p. 268)

Parents also included testimonies about improvements in AAC users' ability to talk to other family members. D's mother noted, "There's a lot of things that it helps her with, mostly she uses it to talk to her grandma and grandpa; when we travel she takes it with her. Tries to use with other people" (Stuart, 1999c, p. 639). N' s aunt also noted:

> I was kinda shocked when he came home and they told me he could speak in a computer and I thought, how can he speak in a computer and first time I went to his house I said, "hello," and he said, "hello," and I thought it was great because now you can communicate with him very easy. (Stuart, 1999d, p. 651)

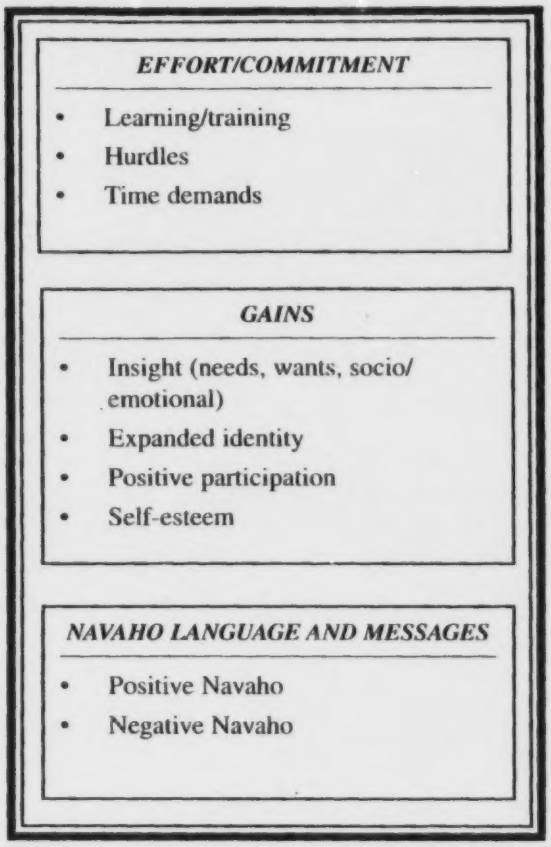

Figure 1
AREAS AFFECTED BY AAC USE

Effort/Commitment

Other aspects of the reality of AAC use fit a category we called Effort/Commitment. New equipment requires modification of the environment and old routines, as well as additional learning, to be

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integrated into operations. Implementing equipment also requires consistent procedures for its maintenance. Generally much of this precedes the actual manifestation of positive results and requires patience and commitment. Also, the addition of equipment means more responsibility and work, as well as confronting uncertainty and fears.

As noted by N's math teacher:

> Maybe I could explain a little bit about the device that N has. He is on an IBM compatible computer with the Words Plus software in it. As far as I'm concerned it takes some learning, training, and a definite level of maintenance to keep his device up and running. Because he accesses it with something on his head, the switch has to be positioned correctly, the device has to be turned on for him and hooked up for him, the battery pack needs to changed, the batteries don't hold, he runs out of batteries, so there are definite concerns which have hit every class that he's in. Especially the first year. I find that something keeps popping up, maintenance and training that it takes. We are lucky that N is good with his device, because we know, he knows how to use it at several different levels. Even at that though, he sometimes gets into the menu and sometimes he doesn't know what he's doing and will switch it from alphabet to the frequency letters or switch the volume off or someone else will be doing it inadvertently and then someone has to know what they are doing in order to get it up and running again. Oh and then these other things. Sometimes he runs over it; the cord will get in the way, the switch gets pulled apart. Then there is an instance where nobody is around to set up the computer. I heard Mom say she don't know how to set up the computer the way we have it right now, she used to know but now it's changed. (Stuart, 1999b, p. 289)

During one of the interviews with D's educational staff, the researcher noted, "I've watched what happens in this process, it's a lot of extra physical work too; it's heavy, you have to pick it up, you have to haul it here and there." D's paraprofessional replied:

> I'm the one who carries it for her. It's not a problem I mean you know it's not a problem. I like D a lot and I would do anything for her. But at the beginning of school year, this first year that I work with her, I didn't know what to think about the Liberator and myself. I'd say, "oh, I'm happy to help her along" but you know, we're both learning, I guess [laughing] I'm scared to touch the computer so that just the way I felt. I felt you know if I touched something one button then it was going to blow up. That's exactly how I felt at the beginning of the school year. (Stuart, 1999a, p. 269)

The researcher replied, "So how did you get over that?" whereupon D's paraprofessional responded, "Well I guess the more work that we put in I conquered it. Now I know that it's not going to break or anything" (Stuart, 1999a, p. 269).

N's staff also talked about the need for teamwork and involving the family. For example, N's homeroom teacher commented:

> I think one of the things I want to tell people is that you really have to keep focused, really have to keep in touch with other people to see what's going on, what's happening, what is working, what is not working. Especially the family, the family has to be involved from day one or else it falls apart on the other end. N spends just as much time or more time at home with this device, so we can't forget that it is our responsibility too. And that is hard. (Stuart, 1999b, p. 294)

When asked about their knowledge in working with equipment, both of the mothers indicated that they had not received formal training and generally were still uncertain about their skills in programming, but had assumed responsibility for day-to-day maintenance, transporting, and dealing with the issues involved with siblings.

When N was asked for his advice to others, he succinctly referred to the sibling issues: "Don't think it's a toy" (Stuart, 1999a, p. 275). This was followed by an explanation from his aunt and mother that his brothers and sisters had "fooled around" with the computer initially and it had

required long discussions and emotional responses from N to stop this.

D's mother discussed lack of knowledge, fear, and the sibling issues as follows:

> There is one difficult part due to we have other kids and they want to learn how to use it and she wouldn't allow the other kids to use it, also you know, I really don't know all the import/outport stuff. Honestly she knows more. I've not had the real training, just meetings with the assistive technology person here. She knows how to work it real good but I can't always remember. It's interesting but its scary, I don't want to mess it up cause it seems like if you push the wrong button you will clear it and have to reprogram it. (Stuart, 1999c, p. 640)

The researcher asked, "How about charging it, keeping it clean, taking it places?" to which D's mother said:

> Oh yeah, we plug it in and charge it and keep it clean. That's just something that has to be done. We put it on the counter in the kitchen. It's high enough the other kids can't get to it there. It's hard to take the Liberator when we're traveling and stuff because we have all the kids. I have a hard time taking it because of the size of it and it's heavy but that's probably the only thing the problem the Liberator has. (Stuart, 1999c, p. 641)

D's classroom teacher and speech-language pathologist also described some concerns and frustrations about the burdens directly placed on the AAC user:

> I think my worst, the problem is, I see D as a very capable child of going from third to fourth to fifth grade—like every other child but the fact of the matter is that she has to learn a bunch more. She can't just learn what everybody else learns, she has to learn extra. She has to learn the icons. She has to learn where they are. She had to learn how to punch it in. She had to learn how to adapt something so that she can get the assignment done. I think that's got to be really frustrating when you know the gap just seems to build because while she's doing all that extra stuff the rest of the kids are on to something else. That's hard for me—I want her to be there and I want her to be better. It's real hard to do that. (Stuart, 1999c, p. 272)

D's speech pathologist also indicated:

> I'm a bit frustrated in her lack of rapid language development. I mean I think she's still really at a one to two word generative level. When I talk to her about noun–verb she just looks at me. Also I see in the classroom the response time is a problem [classroom teacher agrees]. It just takes up time for her to respond, sometimes you have to move the Liberator around, but it is a problem because it has a slow response time and sometimes something is asked like spontaneous questions which she just can't get to. (Stuart, 1999a, p. 273)

Navaho Language and Messages

As described earlier, during the process of videotaping while giving D and N opportunities to try new voice output communication aids, at least one or two Navajo greetings and comments were preprogrammed into the demonstration voice output communication aids (VOCAs). At that time, the response of the AAC users and their families was positive. Recommendations for including some phrases in Navajo were discussed at the summary of the meetings and included in the written reports. However, during field observations of the AAC users, there was no evidence of Navajo messaging or any customization that incorporated acknowledgment of Navajo culture.

During each of the interview sessions, the topic of finding a way of having the VOCA providing Navajo messages arose. The input from the discussions formed two distinct categories, which we referred to as *Plus* and *Minus Navajo*. Plus Navajo commentary might be illustrated as follows: "If only he/she could speak Navajo, then he/she could assume a more normal role." Minus Navajo might be illustrated as "All this and now include Navajo

too?" The following are examples of Plus Navajo commentary:

> *Researcher:* So if you could have anything—something else you would like with the AAC use, what would it be?
>
> *D's mother:* Her grandparents on her Dad's side—they're bilingual and my side of the family they're all Navajo and don't understand English and find that hard. It would be interesting for my family to be able to communicate with her one on one but it don't speak Navajo now.
>
> *Researcher:* I think it's just a matter of putting in the time to get the Navajo translated into phonemes so that we can get it in there.
>
> *D's mother:* Yeah I think they tried it before, I think it's able. I'd like her to be able to at least say "hello" and name her clan. (Stuart, 1999c, pp. 641–649)

To the same question of what additional things would be helpful, N's aunt replied, "Well the computer don't understand Navajo but N does. I think if you know it could somehow do Navajo."

During the discussion with educational staff, N's classroom teacher said:

> Maybe I would share some of the latest issues that we are all working with now and that's the whole idea about N using his Navajo language. As explained, he understands his Navajo language well, being that is what he heard in his environment for the first 12 years of his life exclusively. That's what he understands so he has a grasp of the Navajo language. And issue comes up when we approach the idea of N using the Navajo language [with his VOCA]—should we expect N to learn how to spell Navajo. If N learns to "speak" Navajo [which means he must be able to spell it], will he even have an audience here at school cause who will read his written output because not a lot of people here know how to read Navajo. Cause see the device don't say it right so its pretty much gotta be written. Maybe Mrs. N [High School Navajo language teacher] should talk. She's been a good positive advocate of this position in our team meetings. (Stuart, 1999b, p. 293)

N's Navajo language teacher also commented:

> First let me say that N someday will probably have a job, if they come up with a computer, the kind that I suggested and if he grows some more, and he might be able to work in a court hearing and help the other handicaps and use his computer to communicate. He does have a really good understanding of his Navajo. He can communicate really well in Navajo and I feel that if we get a hold of the kind of computer I am talking about [one that can speak/write Navajo] we can work with N and make a productive person of society and he won't know he's handicapped. (Stuart, 1999b, p. 293)

The following are examples of the Minus Navajo commentary. N's speech-language pathologist stated:

> I feel N knows his device and uses his device to communicate excellently. That is what the focus has been in the past couple of years; now we redirect that and must focus on academics. He has not had a lot of academic focus. Now that I think we're getting him to have a better handle on the device we better keep going and keep him working to address academic issues. I don't know, it seems trying to get Navajo in there is just . . . . (Stuart, 1999b, p. 293)

Talking with D's educational staff, the researcher said, "Let's talk about her need. As far as what mom mentioned, she is Navajo and she has a bilingual culture. Do you have a plan for that?" D's classroom teacher responded:

> I don't think that has been an issue until just recently. The family dynamics have changed; now they're looking at moving toward family with more of the grandmas and grandparents. They're maybe into that extended family situation right now. Up until this point the family was pretty much English speaking. (Stuart, 1999a, p. 279)

D's speech-language pathologist also noted:

> She went to Navajo class just a little while and there just wasn't really any interest there. We've talked about it but you know with Navajo there are many sounds that are not in English so something has to be done so we sound—well so that somehow those sounds could be made correctly. Just to plug in the letters won't do it. (Stuart, 1999a, p. 280)

Debriefing

Upon completion of this research study, the data were analyzed and the categories and patterns were identified. In the fall of that year, the first author returned and met with participants sharing insights from the data. The participants indicated general agreement with our conclusions. They all appeared positive about the idea of disseminating the information and agreed to additional photos for use in presenting data at a national conference. However, the dichotomy surrounding Navajo messaging continued to be evident in the responses to the ideas we presented. The Navajo participants listened to the conclusions, nodded, and when asked if they had comments or questions, said no. Three educational participants (i.e., speech-language pathologist, assistive technologist, classroom teacher) indicated disappointment that we considered the Navajo messaging to be a central issue. Their perceptions were that each of the AAC users had achieved success and was not appreciably limited in functioning without Navajo messages.

D's and N's assistive technology specialist offered the following observation:

> Honestly, I just don't think they would use it that much and there are so many things we have to try to make available in such a limited amount of space. Plus it is so hard to figure out if we have it right and I think it could become confusing for D and probably N, too, although his Navajo skills are stronger.

Conclusion and Future Directions

We gathered information in an effort to learn about the actual experiences of Native American AAC users. Through our data analysis, we were able to identify two categories (i.e., Gains and Effort/Commitment) that shed light on our original inquiry and contribute to the building of a grounded theory.

The data provide descriptions of two Native American AAC users who, without their AAC systems, would not be able to participate in most educational and social activities and who now can communicate with a voice output communication aid in many traditional English-speaking public school activities. Through this process the students have demonstrated competencies that improve their self-esteem and are viewed as positive and exciting by both family members and educational staff. The data also vividly describe the demanding, less-than-perfect realities related to the use of AAC and reflect the continuous commitment, hard work, and effort expended by all participants in the study.

The data also reveal that the question "What is it like to be a Native American AAC user?" must be answered "not uniquely Native American." There is little or no evidence of design and implementation that reflects Native American culture. As we stated earlier, family and cultural issues have been traditionally ignored or deemphasized in AAC decision making. This continues to be the experience of the Navajo AAC users who participated in this study. They do not have the ability to participate in Navajo rituals and customs (even simple greeting and naming their clan) because their AAC systems do not have Navajo messaging capability.

A review of the interview commentary reveals differences among the participants regarding their perceptions of this issue. Navajo participants expressed a need for at least some Navajo messages, whereas educational staff expressed a desire for greater involvement of family in the implementation process. Neither group expressed the perception that they should assume more of the other's responsibilities. Harry (1999), in a keynote address on building reciprocal family–

professional relationships, referred to the process of solving these problems as each group being willing to "bend" toward the central need. Our data do not reveal evidence of "bending," but they do reveal insights that may be helpful in identifying key areas for further investigation:

1. The complexity and inadequacy of technology, combined with the differences in phonological components of Navajo and English, make the task challenging but not impossible.
2. The reality of the large workloads associated with implementing AAC and the limited amount of time available to manifest AAC systems requires prioritizing tasks. Differences in determining which tasks are considered to be first priority reflect differences in values.
3. A lack of understanding and possible insensitivity to Navajo customs contribute to low creativity on the part of educational staff (who presently assume the programming responsibilities) regarding the inclusion of at least some Navajo messages.
4. A lack of input and acceptance of responsibility for programming by Navajo speakers (e.g., family, paraprofessionals, Navajo teachers) places the burden on English-speaking personnel.

Each of these insights offers an area for focus as the implementation of AAC use goes forward. Future investigations (possibly through questionnaires or personal interviews) could obtain information about participants' willingness to make changes that could lead to a solution to the problem of the lack of Navajo messaging capability in AAC systems. The results of the study also provide information that could guide AAC professionals toward avoiding this central issue in new implementations.

As the AAC users increase in their skills, they will exercise more influence over the messaging, which will allow them to indicate a need for Navajo messages to support them in participating in Navajo customs. Also, as technology improves, the option of including some digitized messaging through spoken messages (eliminating the daunting task of overcoming phoneme differences) will become readily available.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

This manuscript was supported in part by Grant No. H029K50072 from the U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors alone and should not be interpreted to have agency endorsement.

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THE EFFECTS OF MULTICULTURAL AND BILINGUAL TRAINING ON PRESERVICE STUDENTS' SELF-REPORTED LEVEL OF COMPETENCY

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ABSTRACT

The differences in preservice students' self-reported level of multicultural/bilingual competencies were investigated. Their scores were determined by the Teaching Competencies for Bilingual/Multicultural Exceptional Children, (TCBMEC), an instrument developed by Prieto, Rueda, and Rodriguez (1981). The results indicated that participants who received in-class experiences perceived their level of competency to be higher than those who received practicum experiences only or no treatment at all. Furthermore, participants who received practicum experiences or no treatment at all, perceived their level of competency to be lower than those who received in-class treatment with practicum experiences. Finally, there were no statistically significant differences between participants who received in-class treatment with practicum experiences and participants who received only in-class treatment.

Teachers' self-perceptions of cultural and linguistic competency as they relate to helping children achieve academic and social potential play a powerful and intricate role in the type of educational services provided to culturally and linguistically diverse children. Moreover, how a teacher perceives a student directly correlates with the teacher's expectations of that student. If the teacher perceives a student as gifted, he or she will expect the student's performance to match that perception. On the other hand, when their teachers' self-perception is one of having deficits, culturally and linguistically diverse children are consistently underrepresented in classrooms for the gifted but, ironically, overrepresented in classrooms for students with mental retardation (Artiles & Trent 1994; Harry, 1994; Obiakor, 1999, Patton, 1998; Utley, Mortweet, & Greenwood, 1998).

According to Nettles, Perna, Hobbs, and Rhodes (1997), African American students represent 16.5% of students in public schools. These same students represent 28.7% of all students placed in special education classes. Similarly, Harry (1992, 1994) noted that Hispanics are overrepresented in classrooms for students with mental retardation. While African American and Hispanic children continue to be overrepresented in many special education classrooms, the number of culturally and linguistically competent teachers continues to be underrepresented (Macedo, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1995).

Data from preservice teacher education programs indicate that the proportion of new educators from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is not keeping up with the rapidly increasing proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse children in special education programs across the nation (Richardson, 1994). Wald (1996) explored the demographics of special education teachers: African Americans represented 10%; Hispanics represented 2%; and European Americans represented 86%.

Despite the fact that over the last two decades the American Association of Colleges for Teacher

Education (AACTE) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have officially acknowledged the importance of institutions' training all preservice teachers from a culturally and linguistically diverse perspective, these preservice teachers continue to lack the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to effectively teach culturally and linguistically diverse children with exceptionalities. In a study conducted by Voltz (2000), principals, general educators, and special educators were asked to identify challenges in urban teaching (where overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse children in special education is most prevalent). Voltz found that 60% of the special education teachers and 73% of the general educators listed student diversity and cultural differences as challenges.

There is a correlation between teacher expectations, beliefs, and value system and the number of African American and Hispanic children placed in classrooms serving children with disabilities (Artiles & Trent, 1994). Patton and Baytops (1995) contended that "some teachers bring negative baggage with them to the identification and intervention process. Such individuals tend to bring narrow ethnocentric beliefs, attitudes and predispositions, or xenophobic attitudes to the identification and intervention process" (p. 21). Furthermore, these teachers' attitudes can serve as a cultural clash for children whose cultural background is different from that of the teacher. For example, Irvine (1990) stated that the absence of cultural synchronization between teachers and students could be the source of negative teacher expectations. Cultural synchronization is defined as the harmonization between a teacher's knowledge, skills, and attitudes and a child's cultural and linguistic background.

This lack of cultural synchronization between teachers and children has serious implications. Teachers tend to teach in a style that matches their own cultural value system. Historical research has maintained the relationship between teacher expectations and student performance. A teacher's attitude can determine whether children will be placed in classrooms for students with mental retardation simply because of that teacher's low expectations of culturally and linguistically diverse children (Banks, 1972; Dunn, 1968). The self-fulfilling prophecy is still prevalent in classrooms. Educators expect more of some students and less of others, especially those whose cultural and linguistic background is not similar to their own (Farley, 1988). Ortiz and Yates (1989) maintained that many times teachers will lower their expectations for children whose experiences don't match their own experiences or those of the schools' major population. Similarly, Obiakor (1999) noted that issues that have an impact on culturally and linguistically diverse children in general and special education classrooms are directly or indirectly connected to teacher expectations.

Inaccurate perceptions; stereotypes; and lack of familiarity with ethnic groups, their culture, history, and contemporary experiences can be causes for the lack of cultural synchronization. This ultimately leads to low expectations and unwarranted generalizations about the educational capabilities of culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities and often results in overreferral, erroneous labeling, and overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic children (Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995; Irvine, 1990; Ortiz & Yates, 1989; Patton, 1998). Disturbingly, in an ethnographic study, teachers who perceived themselves as colorblind suspended African American males at a disproportionately higher rate and failed to develop curriculum that integrated content reflective of an African American perspective (Schofield, 2001).

The perceptions of deficiency are still evident in teacher training programs (Ford, 1995). There is a paucity of studies that *empirically* support the rationale for training all preservice teachers from a culturally and linguistically diverse perspective. According to Artiles and Zamora-Duran (1997), "we currently possess a basic knowledge base on the interaction between cultural and human development and need to start implementing empirical studies in the area of multicultural teacher education" (p. 277). The paucity of research formed the rationale for the study described here, which was designed to provide empirical data addressing preservice teachers' self-reported level of competency in educating culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

In this study, preservice teachers attended a rural, predominantly White university. These students were enrolled in EED 202: Introduction to Elementary Education and EED 203: Participation in Elementary Education; or SED 202: Introductory to Secondary Education and SED 203: Participation in Secondary Education. Demographic information collected about the participants indicated that 41 were elementary education majors and 30 were secondary education majors. Of the 71 participants, 60 were female and 11 were male; 68 were White and 3 were African American; 46 were single, 22 were married, and 3 were divorced. The size of their hometowns ranged from 200 to 1 million. No participant reported relevant experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities.

A series of one-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were used to statistically remove the effects of hometown size, since it may affect the amount of exposure and/or experience participants have with culturally and linguistically diverse groups. The larger the hometown, the greater the likelihood of the participants' having experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities. For example, a participant whose hometown is Kansas City, Missouri, with a population of 434,829, will have a greater chance of exposure than someone whose hometown is Taos, Missouri, with a population of 802. The ANCOVA was used to statistically remove any initial differences between the treatment group through multiple linear regression (Kerlinger, 1986). The experimentwise Type I error in the present study is .03 on a .01 significance level.

After enrollment was verified, the participants were randomly selected for in-class treatment, and/or special field placement, and/or regular field placement. The practicum settings represented children of both genders from a variety of cultural and linguistic groups who had exceptionalities. The students were randomly assigned in four different schools in four different classrooms in urban and rural settings.

INSTRUMENT

The instrument used for this study was an 18-item questionnaire, Teaching Competencies for Bilingual/Multicultural Exceptional Children (TCBMEC; Prieto, Rueda, & Rodriguez, 1981). This questionnaire identifies teacher competencies in the education of culturally diverse and/or bilingual children who are exceptional and reflects essential culturally and linguistically diverse teacher training competencies identified by Baca and Amato (1989) and Ortiz and Yates (1989).

The original authors conducted an extensive literature search to identify those teacher competencies that appeared to have an empirical or conceptual basis and merited inclusion in this list of competencies. They also conducted a needs assessment survey that involved 77 public school teachers presently serving bilingual and/or multicultural children with exceptionalities in special education. To establish the construct validity of this scale, Adams and McSwain (1991) conducted a common factor analysis with squared multiple correlation as a prior commonality with varimax orthogonal rotation. Three factors were identified (see Table 1): Factor I, which showed a factor loading of .50 or higher on seven items, identified curriculum development skills; Factor II, which showed a factor loading of .50 or higher on seven items, identified parent and family skills. Factor III, which showed a factor loading of .50 or higher on four items, identified assessment skills. A coefficient alpha, a statistical method, was used to establish internal consistency. The coefficient alpha showed .90 on Factors I and II and .83 on Factor III. The overall coefficient alpha was .94, which meets acceptable reliability standards (Nunnally, 1967). A 5-point Likert scale was used. A score of 1 represented incompetent, 2 barely competent, 3 competent, 4 very competent, and 5 extremely competent.

PROCEDURES

The hypotheses formulated as a basis for the research questions were as follows:

1. There would be no significant differences between the four experimental groups on

TABLE 1

ROTATED FACTOR PATTERN FOR THE 18 ITEMS FORMING THE SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE

Item	*Factor I*	*Factor II*	*Factor III*
Curriculum	0.73640*	0.28195	0.15584
Family	0.05214	0.74691*	0.38317
Family	0.24163	0.76751*	0.32778
Family	0.59355	0.61983	–0.08800
Curriculum	0.56727*	0.18882	0.49918
Family	0.43635	0.65805*	0.23614
Curriculum	0.62080	0.42069	0.21230
Curriculum	0.70428*	0.32534	0.20023
Curriculum	0.63265*	0.23324	0.35223
Curriculum	0.63790*	0.32756	0.48085
Family	0.51318	0.65903*	0.13197
Family	0.34873	0.57096*	0.49293
Assessment	0.12974	0.15341	0.80633*
Assessment	0.27447	0.24379	0.77995*
Assessment	0.54056	0.30963	0.57766*
Curriculum	0.71538*	0.07985	0.50635
Family	0.38195	0.61091*	0.17787
Assessment	0.22707	0.46915	0.60397*

Note. **indicates the factor on which the item is loaded.*
From Prieto, Rueda, & Rodriguez, 1981.

their self-reported level of multicultural and/or bilingual competencies on Factor I curriculum development skills.

2. There would be no significant differences between the four experimental groups on their self-reported level of multicultural and/or bilingual competencies on Factor II, parent and family skills of the TCBMEC.
3. There would be no significant differences between the four experimental groups on their self-reported level of multicultural and/or bilingual competencies on Factor III, assessment skills of the TCBMEC.

The participants were assigned to treatment group A, B, C, or D. Oliver and Berger (1980) pointed out that pretesting can sensitize participants to the experimental treatment conditions, especially when participating in an attitude experiment. To control for the variable of a heightened sensitivity level to the independent variable, a pretest comparable to the posttest was given to determine (a) the participants' preexisting self-reported level of competency in the multicultural and/or bilingual competencies of children with exceptionalities and (b) the amount of variance between the four treatment groups. This pretest was based on a set of 62 detailed multicultural

and/or bilingual competencies (Pynn, 1981). There was no significant variance between or among the four experimental groups on the pretest, and all four treatment groups self-reported their competency level to be an average score of 1 on a 5-point Likert scale.

Using the 18 competencies listed on the questionnaire as the knowledge base, the treatment for Experimental Group A consisted of lectures, in-class activities, assignments, tests, and special field placement. The participants were required to take notes based on lectures pertaining to history, definitions, legislation and litigation, theories, family structure, child-rearing patterns, and diagnostic issues. In-class activities consisted of purchasing multicultural and/or bilingual curriculum materials totaling $2,000, completing a rationale paper for teaching from a multicultural and/or bilingual perspective, critiquing several articles addressing the education of culturally diverse and or bilingual children with exceptionalities, and passing the course with at least 75% accuracy.

In addition to these in-class activities, the participants completed 45 hours in a special field placement. During this placement they were required to complete the following assignments: (a) apply information found in the articles critiqued during class to their field experiences; (b) complete an evaluation checklist of books and materials (Neugebauer, 1990); (c) complete a program evaluation checklist; (d) implement several multicultural and/or bilingual activities with children; (e) analyze three case studies, and (f) complete a multicultural self-report inventory (Slade & Conoley, 1989).

Experimental Group B received the same in-class treatment as Experimental Group A, but did not receive special field treatment. Experimental Group C received the same special field treatment as Group A but did not receive in-class treatment. Experimental Group D was the control group and did not receive in-class treatment or special field placement. Table 2 outlines the scheduling of the treatment for this study. A script was developed based on this outline. The number of presentations and duration of special field placement was applied directly and equally to Experimental Groups A and C.

Fidelity of Treatment

Baca (1984) reviewed several competency-related studies that indicated certain competencies as being consistently ranked as important by many sources (McLean, 1981; Prieto et al., 1981; Pynn, 1981; Salend, Michael, & Taylor, 1984). Following are seven competencies identified by Baca as important for working with culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional (CLDE) children:

(a) Desire to work with CLDE students.

(b) Ability to work effectively with parents of CLDE students.

(c) Ability to develop appropriate IEPs for CLDE students.

(d) Knowledge and sensitivity toward the language and the culture of the group to be served.

(e) Ability to teach ESL and CLDE students.

(f) Ability to conduct nonbiased assessment with CLDE students.

(g) Ability to use appropriate methods and materials when working with CLDE students. (p. 105)

A panel of multicultural and/or bilingual experts representing the Association of Cross-Cultural Education and Social Studies (ACCESS) developed a detailed set of 62 multicultural and/or bilingual competencies (Pynn, 1981), which fell under the following major headings: (a) curriculum and instruction, (b) assessment and evaluation, (c) classroom management, (d) counseling, (e) advocacy and public relations, and (f) research. The treatment for the participants was directly based on these competencies. In addition, there was only one course instructor who used the same script for both elementary education and secondary education participants.

Ethical Implications

As mentioned earlier, there is a paucity of studies that empirically support the rational for training preservice teachers from a culturally and linguistically diverse perspective. This premise was the

TABLE 2

OUTLINE FOR TREATMENT

Procedures	*Treatment*	*Date*
Lecture and exams	The lectures and exams covered (a) historical overview of culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities; (b) definitions relative to multicultural bilingual education; (c) legislative and litigation relative to identification and placement of culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities; (d) theoretical perspectives relating to the overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities; (e) family roles in the special education process; (f) pedagogy of culturally and linguistically diverse children in special education classrooms.	February
Article critiques	Participants were required to critique multicultural and bilingual articles by (a) summarizing major points and (b) discussing implications these major points have for culturally and linguistically diverse children, teachers, and families.	February
Rationale paper	Participants were required to submit a five-page paper discussing the rationale for teaching from a culturally and linguistically diverse perspective.	March
Budget	Participants were required to purchase $2,000 worth of instructional materials. Participants were required to describe the cultural and linguistic relevancy of each item.	March
Videotape	Participants were required to view multicultural videotapes and discuss implications the issues presented in these tapes might have for children, families, and teachers.	March
Special field placements	Participants were placed in a 45-hour practicum. They were required to (a) implement teaching strategies from the articles; (b) evaluate books and materials for multicultural and bilingual relevancy (Neugebauer, 1987); (c) teach a multicultural bilingual theme unit; (d) select three culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities and prepare a case study; (e) complete a multicultural self-report inventory (Slade & Conoley, 1989).	March, April, May
Posttest	Participants were administered Teaching Competencies for Bilingual Multicultural Exceptional Children (Prieto, Rueda, & Rodriguez, 1981).	May
Debrief participants	All participants were brought together to discuss their reactions to the experiment.	May

overriding factor when looking at Experimental Group D, who received no in-class or special field treatment. In addition, the author used *Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants (American Psychological Association,* 1982) as a guide.

Data Collection and Analysis

To ensure that a sufficient number of participants completed and returned the questionnaire, attendance was taken before the instrument was distributed, and participants who did not attend class completed the instrument during a scheduled appointment with the instructor. A total of 71 posttest scores were analyzed: 14 for Experimental Group A, 17 for Experimental Group B, 21 for Experimental Group C, and 19 for Experimental Group D.

The independent variables in this study were lectures, in-class activities, assignments, tests, and special field placement. The dependent variables were posttest scores as measured by the TCBMEC between and among the four experimental groups. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used. The ANCOVA is an analysis that tests the significance of the differences among the means of treatment groups, which statistically removes any initial differences between the treatment groups through multiple linear regression (Kerlinger, 1986). The Fisher Least Significant Difference Posthoc Test (LSD) was used with the analysis to determine differences among or between the four treatment groups that were found to have significant main effects in the analysis of covariance. The experimentwise Type I error in the present study is .03 on a .01 significance level. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the linear relationship between the factors (Kerlinger, 1986).

First, the impact of the treatment between and among the four experimental groups was determined. A computer program to perform an *F* test for analysis of covariance that is available in the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) package was used (Shavelson, 1988). The *F* value indicates whether or not the treatment variable is significantly related to the dependent measure. The *F* value statistically determines whether there was a difference between two or more means and whether there was a relationship between participants and their responses. It does not give specific information about the strength of the treatment effect. An R^2 was employed to tell how much influence the treatment variables had on the outcome measure (Kamil, Langer, & Shanahan, 1985; Rosenthal & Rosnow 1984; Shavelson, 1988). An alpha level of .01 was used for all statistical tests.

Results

The analysis of covariance in Table 3 shows there was a statistically significant difference between the four treatment groups on Factor I. The *F* (7.54) indicates that the independent variable was significantly related to the dependent variable. The R^2 (.259) shows that 25% of the variation in the posttest scores was due directly to treatment, meaning that coursework affected the participants' self-reported level of competency in curriculum development in multicultural and/or bilingual education of children with exceptionalities.

The analysis of covariance in Table 4 shows there was a statistically significant difference between treatment groups on Factor II. The *F* (4.61) indicates that the independent variable was significantly related to the dependent variable. The R^2 (.189) shows that 18% of the variation in the posttest scores was due directly to treatment, meaning that coursework and special field placement affected the participants' self-reported level of competency in understanding family and parents with regard to multicultural and/or bilingual children with exceptionalities.

The analysis of covariance in Table 5 shows there was no statistically significant difference between treatment groups for Factor III. The *F* (1.52) indicates that the variation in posttest scores was not significantly related to the dependent variable. The R^2 (.065) shows that 6% of the variation in posttest scores was due to treatment, meaning that coursework and special field placement did not statistically affect the participants' self-reported level of competency in assessment skills necessary for the education of culturally and

TABLE 3

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE FOR TREATMENT AND FACTOR I

Source	*df*	*SS*	*F*
Treatment	3	9.63030151	7.54
Elementary	1	0.55335341	1.30
Secondary	1	0.42999812	0.99
Error	65	27.65722138	

Note. $R^2 = .259$

linguistically diverse children with exceptionalities.

Generally speaking, participants who received a grade of A on assignments, field experiences, and tests tended to self-report their level of competency to be higher than those who received a lower grade. All students were required to complete a field experience, with the grade weight being equal for all four groups. Participants who turned in below-average work tended to report a lower level of competency. Further analysis of the data collected from the special field placement yielded similar results. As a case in point, all activities required by participants in special field placements were analyzed based on cultural and linguistic accuracy and relevancy, with a letter grade assigned. Participants from groups B, C, and D submitted below-average work and thus subsequently reported a lower level of competency.

Participants receiving both multicultural and/or bilingual coursework and special field placement self-reported their level of competency for Factor I to be significantly higher than those who received only special field placement or no treatment at all. These same participants, however, did not self-report their level of competency to be significantly higher than the participants who received only coursework. Participants who received only coursework self-reported their level of competency for Factor I to be higher than those who received special field placement or no treatment at all. Participants who received only special

TABLE 4

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE FOR TREATMENT AND FACTOR II

Source	*df*	*SS*	*F*
Treatment	3	5.99765327	4.61
Elementary	1	0.92292173	2.13
Secondary	1	0.89682087	2.07
Error	65	28.16305249	

Note. $R^2 = .189$

TABLE 5

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE FOR TREATMENT AND FACTOR III

Source	*df*	*SS*	*F*
Treatment	3	2.09535554	1.52
Elementary	1	0.01029510	0.02
Secondary	1	0.00642830	0.01
Error	65	29.88623387	

Note. $R^2 = .065$

field placement did not self-report their level of competency to be higher than those who received no treatment at all.

Participants who received both multicultural and/or bilingual coursework and special field placement treatment self-reported their level of competency for Factor II to be significantly higher than those who received only special field placement or no treatment at all. These same participants, however, did not self-report their level of competency to be significantly higher than those who received only coursework. Participants who received only coursework self-reported their level of competency for Factor II to be higher than those who received special field placement or no treatment at all. Participants who received only special field placement did not self-report their level of competency to be higher than those who received no treatment at all.

Participants receiving both multicultural coursework and special field placement did not self-report their level of competency for Factor III to be significantly higher than those who received only special field placement or no treatment at all. These same participants did not self-report their level of competency to be significantly higher than those who received only coursework. Participants who received only coursework did not self-report their level of competency for Factor III to be higher than those who received special field placement or no treatment at all. Participants who received only special field placement did not self-report their level of competency to be higher than those who received no treatment at all. There was no significant difference between elementary education and secondary education majors on all three factors.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of multicultural and/or bilingual training on selected preservice teachers' self-reported level of competency in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse children with exceptionalities. The most potent independent variable appears to be in-class treatment. The activities required of the participants in Groups A and B appeared to have had the greatest impact on their self-reported level of competency in multicultural and/or bilingual education of children who have exceptionalities. The participants in Group A submitted activities that had the highest level of cultural and linguistic accuracy and relevancy and rated their multicultural self-report as the highest among the groups that received special field placement. Therefore, field experiences without in-class treatment did very little to affect participants' self-reported level of competencies in multicultural and/or bilingual education. Reasons for this might be that (a) the number of hours spent during the practicum were insufficient; (b) the in-class information, activities, and tests served as a strong foundation and provid-

ed relevant theoretical information that could not be gained from a practical setting; (c) participants who received only practicum experience or no treatment had preconceived notions regarding the education of culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities that were not manipulated via in-class treatment; and (d) the performance-based requirements of the practicum did not correspond to the competencies

Since the findings of this study empirically support predominantly qualitative research, (Baca, 1984; Baca & Amato, 1989; Baca & Harris 1988; Benavides, 1989; McLean, 1981; Medina, 1986; Prieto et al., 1981; Salend et al., 1984) it can be concluded that preservice teachers would benefit from in-class cultural and linguistic training. The mean scores of the four treatment groups do imply that there still is room for an increase in self-reported levels of competency in multicultural and bilingual education of children with exceptionalities. What type(s) of treatment can provide a higher increase in mean scores? What are the long-term effects of in-class treatment? Does this 16-week treatment have any long-term impact, or would a 4- to 5-year infusion of multicultural and/or bilingual training have a stronger impact on increasing preservice teachers' self-reported level of competency in multicultural and/or bilingual education of children with exceptionalities?

These findings do imply that practicum experiences alone may not be effective. Questions need to be answered regarding the use of practicum experiences in multicultural and/or bilingual settings. If the practicum experiences were longer, would it affect preservice teachers' self-reported level of competency in bilingual and/or multicultural education of children with exceptionalities? The participants in this study were placed in settings twice a week for 2.5 hours. Would allowing the students to observe the activities in the classroom on a daily basis, thereby providing some consistency and continuity, increase their self-reported competency?

Limitations

This study was limited to elementary and secondary education majors attending a predominantly White rural college. Furthermore, cooperating teachers' attitudes toward multicultural education could have affected the quality of the practicum experience. Finally, the population of culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities varied between the practicum sites, therefore allowing some of the participants more exposure than other participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study are considered preliminary due to the small sample size. Similar studies with larger randomized sample sizes would be one recommendation for future research. A study to measure college professors' performance-based competency in multicultural and bilingual education of children with exceptionalities would also be beneficial. If college professors are not competent in this area, it would be unrealistic to expect preservice teachers to gain competency in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse children with exceptionalities. As a case in point, data from a study conducted by Utley, Delquadri, Obiakor, and Mims (2000) that investigated perceptions of general and special educators working with multicultural students with and without disabilities suggested that nearly 40% of the teachers surveyed were not provided with culturally relevant and appropriate coursework in teaching multicultural students with and without disabilities in their preservice training programs. "Their knowledge base in multicultural education was based upon other avenues of education such as attending workshops and conferences, and reading professional journals" (p. 15).

Studies to compare the efficacy of cultural and linguistic training experiences that vary in duration would be beneficial. Would a 4-year infusion, as compared to a 16-week multicultural training session, have a greater impact on levels of performance-based competency? These studies may provide answers to questions about the long-term effects of multicultural training and the relevancy of practicum experiences.

A follow-up study during the participants' first year of teaching experience to determine whether

competencies taught during preservice training are actually implemented in a public school setting would provide much-needed longitudinal data. These data should be based on measures such as direct field observations, interviews, and/or tape recordings and would provide beneficial information from uncontrolled natural environments.

Conclusion

Although increasing preservice teachers' self-reported level of competency in the multicultural and/or bilingual education of children who have exceptionalities is an important first step, it is inadequate. It is essential that preservice teachers demonstrate high levels of performance-based competency rather than high levels of self-reported competency. Colleges and universities are now expected to train preservice teachers from a knowledge-based perspective. Preservice teachers who demonstrate high levels of performance-based competency, as opposed to high levels of self-reported competency, are more likely to understand the issues surrounding the education of culturally and linguistically diverse children with exceptionalities. Training preservice teachers who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes is the most immediate way to create a climate of cultural synchronization for all such children.

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FACTORS AFFECTING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES FOR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH SUSPECTED LANGUAGE-LEARNING DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on factors that impact identification of and services for English-language learners (ELLs) with suspected language-learning disabilities. These factors include (a) home and school environments, (b) the school's philosophy, (c) instructional strategies, and (d) other contextual variables that affect language use. In addition, these factors must be taken into account in evaluating language, communication, and academic strengths and weaknesses. The author discusses the impact of these factors on the language and communication skills and academic progress of Roberto, an ELL whose home language is Spanish and who was diagnosed with a language-learning disability in both Spanish and English when he entered middle school. When these factors are addressed and policies put in place before ELLs enter school, these students may be helped earlier and be provided with effective educational services.

The process of identifying a potential language-learning disability and implementing appropriate intervention strategies is like assembling a multidimensional puzzle. The pieces may need to be reconfigured as the student is faced with more complex learning material, greater demands are put upon the student to communicate in various contexts, or the curriculum places greater emphasis on reading and written expression. The puzzle is more difficult to assemble when a student's first language is other than English. In that case, language-learning disabilities may be reflected in one or both languages and to varying degrees depending on the classroom context and academic area considered.

Thus, the task of assessing and working with such students can be challenging in a number of ways, including identifying whether the student's communication and academic performance reflect a language impairment or language difference and determining which factors impact this problem. The task is further complicated by the fact that in the majority of cases there is no apparent physical cause such as a cleft palate or a hearing impairment to explain the student's challenge in acquiring a new language as effectively as other students learning a second language. This fact can be difficult to accept for any parent, but particularly for those who are unfamiliar with the values, assumptions, and procedures followed in special education and with the labels that are typically assigned to identify and provide services for their children (Harry, 1992; Pang & Cheng, 1998). The challenge of documenting language impairments versus differences in English-language learners (ELLs) has been discussed in the literature (Battle, 1993; Cheng, 1991; Gutiérrez-Clellen, 1996; Langdon, 1992b).

Language "is essentially a cultural phenomenon, both reflecting and transmitting deeply held cultural values and beliefs" (van Kleeck, 1994, p. 74). Therefore, information about the parents'

and family's expectations, home-related experiences, and the parents' perception of their child's skills is crucial in the assessment process. Furthermore, knowledge of the student's learning environment must be obtained. Finally, careful observations of an ELL with suspected language-learning impairments in different classroom contexts may help the special education professional team (i.e., speech-language pathologist, psychologist, special education teacher or resource specialist) to identify communication and learning strengths and challenges. These observations can also identify contextual features that are conducive to enhancing a student's language and literacy abilities (Ruíz, 1995a, 1995b).

The literature cautions against the exclusive use of standardized tests to measure language abilities in these students to place them in special education instead of seeking other programs to accommodate their learning needs (Valdés & Figueroa, 1995). Numerous researchers have documented the disproportionate number of culturally and linguistically diverse students who are placed in special education (Cummins, 1984; Ortíz & Yates, 1983; Rueda, 1989). Therefore, supplementing results with authentic assessment methods has been recommended to provide more accurate measures (Farr & Trumbull, 1997; Figueroa, 1999; Kayser, 1995; Langdon, 1992b). These methods include (a) evaluating a student's performance in various contexts such as home and school, (b) eliciting language samples under different conditions such as storytelling, (c) symbolic play or simulations, and (d) evaluating observations and portfolios. Although it is time consuming, a process that includes a range of measures such as those listed above can provide a more complete picture of the student's strengths and weaknesses and delineate areas in need of specialized intervention.

This article is focused on factors that impact the language use and learning of ELLs as well as the process of assessing a possible language-learning disability. It also illustrates how speech and language pathologists and special educators can successfully collaborate with other school personnel in this process. The first section discusses specific factors to consider when assessing an ELL for possible language-learning difficulties. Some factors are addressed using Hispanic groups as examples; nevertheless, all of the factors discussed are applicable to any ELL, as long as individual differences are examined. Among critical factors are (a) the home and school environments, (b) the school's philosophy of teaching, (c) instructional strategies used, and (d) contextual variables that affect language use. The second section discusses Roberto, an ELL who was diagnosed with a language-learning disability in both Spanish and English at the time of entering middle school. Roberto's case study is specific because his formal instruction was offered in Spanish, his primary language.

Definitions

The term *bilingual* has been used extensively in the literature to refer to students who have varying degrees of proficiencies in two languages. The term *limited-English proficient (LEP)* has also been used, but it is avoided because it has a negative connotation (August & Hakuta, 1998). In this article, the term *ELL* is used to refer to those students who have not mastered English at a level to successfully follow an English-only curriculum without additional specialized instruction in English and/or support in the student's native language. *Language-learning disabilities* are defined as difficulties in comprehending or using spoken, signed, or written language.

Factors Affecting Language Use and Learning of English-Language Learners

Home and School Environments

A number of home and school environment factors may influence a student's language use and academic learning and should be considered when assessing an ELL for possible language-learning impairments. These factors relate to the expectations of the family and school for language development and use, as well as an understanding of how home experiences prepare students for the

school environment. Table 1 lists the various factors that should be considered in the assessment process.

Home environment. Language interaction patterns among children and adults who come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are highly variable within and across their groups. These interactions are often very different from those of the mainstream White middle class American culture. For example, Heath (1983; 1986) found that African American parents and recent immigrant Mexican families rarely asked for known information from their children.

However, children's language patterns may also vary depending on the persons with whom they are interacting. Delgado-Gaitán & Trueba (1991) reported that Mexican American children used more complex language while interacting with peers than they did when interacting with their parents. They were able to provide more detailed explanations about how and why they would choose to get involved in an activity. They were able to "share in the division of labor and to jointly negotiate the level of work" (p. 146). This type of verbal negotiation is necessary in a classroom setting when students must follow certain rules, share, or face a situation in which they need to decide how and when to assist a classmate. Robinson-Zañartu (1996) reported that Native American children are raised to display their knowledge only when they are ready to do so.

The amount of talk among groups of speakers representing a given culture or language is also highly variable. Van Kleeck (1994) provided a comprehensive review of child–parent and child–adult verbal interaction among various speakers of various languages and cultures. Although generalization of these initial findings to all levels of a culture is unfair, understanding the ELL language interaction patterns at home can provide helpful insights into the types of language exposure and expectations with which students enter the school system.

Among other considerations are the level of ELLs' exposure to preliteracy activities prior to their entrance into school and the possible facilitative effects of bilingualism on metalinguistic development. Factors to consider include having a notion of literacy, abstract knowledge of the sound and structure of language, and adequate vocabulary development (August & Hakuta, 1998; Ferdman, Weber, & Ramírez, 1994). In some situations, families have had very limited formal education; therefore, their children have limited access to reading materials in the home. In addition, the meaning of *literacy* is highly variable from one family to another. Specifically, families may expose their children to print, but adults may not necessarily read to them. Thus, some children learn to recite the alphabet, name letters, and read some words prior to entering school. There are also variations in the interaction between parents and the child while they read together. Some parents read the text without making comments about what is read, while others pause and discuss the plot of the story and the possible outcomes (Fishman, 1987; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983).

Therefore, interviewing the significant persons in the student's life about the amount and type of exposure to literacy enables the special education staff to gain a broader perspective on his or her experiences in that area at home. It should also be acknowledged that it would be inappropriate to suggest to parents who have no literacy skills in their native language to read to their children. Unfortunately, this suggestion has often been offered to parents of ELLs during conferences with members of the special education professional team.

A third set of factors to consider is the family's attitude toward speech, language, learning, and other disabilities. Langdon (1992a) reported that certain Hispanic families accept visible disabilities such as cleft palate or a physical problem more readily than other, more covert disabilities. Similar concerns have been reported by parents of children coming from various Asian-Pacific cultures. These parents often have difficulty accepting labels that imply the presence of mental retardation or learning disabilities (Harry, 1992; Pang & Cheng, 1998). In addition, many parents have difficulty accepting their child's learning impairment because their child's reading and writing skills exceed their own literacy skills. To increase parents' input and understanding of concerns that may have been raised about their child, Harry (1992) suggested that professionals ask parents to

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF FACTORS IMPACTING LANGUAGE AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Factors	*Relevant Studies Cited in the Article*
Home Environment	
Parent–child verbal interactions	Delgado-Gaitán (1991); Heath (1982, 1983, 1986); van Kleeck (1994)
Preliteracy activities	Ferdman, Weber, & Martínez (1994); Fishman (1987); Heath (1983); Taylor (1982)
Attitude toward disability	Harry (1992); Langdon (1992b); Pang & Cheng (1998)
Value for formal education	Goldenberg & Gallimore (1995); Langdon (1992a)
School Environment	
Continuities and discontinuities	August & Hakuta (1998); Delgado, Gaitán, & Trueba (1991); Heath (1986); Mehan, Hartweck, & Meihls (1986)
Classroom hidden rules	Nelson (1994); Westby (1997)
Student attitudes toward school and the language	Langdon (1992a); Nieto (1996); Vogel Zanger (1994)
High expectations from students	Berman et al. (1995); Moll (1988)
Strong leadership	Carter & Chatfield (1986); Slavin & Yampolsky (1992); Tikunoff et al. (1991)
Staff development to share strategies	Berman et al. (1995); Carter & Chatfield (1986)
Gradual transitions	Saunders et al. (1998)
Specific instructional strategies	Gersten et al. (1998); Goldenberg & Gallimore (1991); Saunders et al. (1998)
Exposure to native speakers of the languages	Berman et al. (1995); Saunders et al. (1998); Tikunoff et al. (1991)
Opportunities for oral and written expression	Gersten et al. (1998); Goldenberg (1992–1993); Saunders et al., (1998)
Scaffolding of information presented	Gersten et al. (1998); Tikunoff et al. (1991)
Specific research for ELL with speech-language impairments	Ruíz (1995a; 1995b)

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describe their child's development and their interpretation of what may be the source of their child's language or learning delay. At the same time, once a diagnosis is made, parents should be asked whether they understand the diagnostic label and what their feelings are regarding the diagnosis.

When parental participation in school or interventions is suggested, the parents of ELLs may shy away from involvement. Reasons may be their inadequate command of English, feelings of insecurity about school, and high regard for teachers and their status as authorities. Parents may also have difficulty questioning the school procedures or decisions. They may feel ill prepared to help their children do their homework even in the parents' primary language. The majority of parents of ELLs fortunately value education and want the best for their children (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). When offered specific suggestions regarding how to proceed at home, parents are willing to try various strategies, especially when there is follow-up on the part of a staff member (Langdon, 1992a). As special education professional team members assess the language and literacy skills of school-age ELLs, they must take the home environment of these students into account and consider the possible impact that this environment may have on the students' language use and learning.

School environment. Investigations of ELLs have highlighted the discourse continuities and discontinuities that exist between home and school (Delgado-Gaitán & Trueba, 1991; Heath, 1986; Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986). Classrooms have their own discourse rules, and they vary from teacher to teacher. English-language learners need to learn when to talk and not to talk and how to respond to the explicit and subtler hints provided by the teacher (Westby, 1997). They must learn not only the English language, but also the curriculum as set forth by the school, the textbooks, and the teacher. They also must be able to use knowledge of the mainstream culture in which they live to interpret and comprehend classroom materials (Nelson, 1994). Thus, many ELLs may need more time to learn how to adapt to the school scene because of unfamiliarity with the setting and incomplete command of the English language. The adjustment is often more difficult when the school does not account for or does not recognize the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of its ELLs.

Several studies have reported that ELLs drop out of school because they feel alienated, inferior, or ignored (Nieto, 1996; Vogel Zanger, 1994). Their parents may be less involved with school due to socioeconomic problems such as lack of stable jobs, money, and reliable transportation. Other reasons why these students need more support are their parents' previous experiences with school failure in their home country or in the United States or their lack of opportunity to attend school (Crawford, 1993; Langdon, 1992a; Nieto, 1996). Thus, demands for adapting to school and learning and understanding how to respond in a classroom setting where English is used as the primary language of instruction may influence the ELL's pace and success in learning.

In summary, both the home and school environments must be assessed concurrently with the language and literacy skills of an ELL to determine the possible positive or negative effects they may have on his or her academic performance. While it is important to determine the impact of these factors on the student's use of language and literacy, it is equally important to determine the effects of the school's philosophy and the instructional strategies used by educators on the student's learning.

School Philosophy and Instructional Strategies

The philosophy behind the bilingual program used within the school, the manner in which the school supports ELLs, and the strategies used by educators to instruct ELLs may impact their language and learning—especially in the case of those who have language-learning impairments. The manner in which these various factors interact or are carried out in the everyday context of the classroom may affect learning as well.

School philosophy. Frequently, there are significant differences within districts, and even schools,

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in the types of instructional programs implemented, often because classes that are designated as bilingual are conducted in very different ways. Bilingual classrooms may vary in the language used for different lessons, in the implementation of specific teaching strategies, and in the teachers' own proficiency in the languages.

In their review of 33 studies on bilingual education, August and Hakuta (1998) identified several attributes of successful programs for ELLs. Not all of the studies they reviewed included all of these attributes, but several were represented in the programs described. Some of these attributes represented the general philosophy of the school. For example, successful programs were judged to be those that demonstrated a supportive schoolwide climate as demonstrated by explicit respect for the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the ELLs, high expectations for the students, and fostering of the ELLs' involvement (Berman, McLaughlin, McLeod, Minicucci, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Moll, 1988). Respect for the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of ELLs may be evidenced by offering bilingual instruction, ongoing communication with parents, and inclusion of their values and experiences in the curriculum (Moll, 1988; Nieto, 1996). The literature has addressed attempts to determine the impact of student expectations and teacher attitudes toward ELLs of various racial and linguistic backgrounds on their learning. There is no question that high expectations do yield positive results, as documented in the case of Escalante and other teachers working in the Garfield High School in East Los Angeles (Nieto, 1996).

A second attribute involved strong leadership from the school principal (Carter & Chatfield, 1986; Tikunoff et al., 1991) or from others who hold leadership roles, such as site program facilitators and teachers (Slavin & Yampolsky, 1992). A third attribute was staff development to discuss instructional issues associated with ELLs and share specific techniques to teach content by using English language development strategies (Berman et al., 1995; Carter & Chatfield, 1986).

One final success factor mentioned by August and Hakuta (1998) focused on collaboration within and between schools in which general and special education personnel engaged in dialogs to determine students' instructional programs. Gradual transitions from one program to another prior to being fully included in an all-English curriculum were emphasized (Saunders, O'Brien, Lennon, & McLean, 1998). These transitional collaborative programs focus on developing early academics and reading in Spanish, usually during the first three grades, while gradually introducing English language oral proficiency to ensure that the students will eventually be able to use the English language in academic subjects. The transition is accomplished with careful monitoring and assessment of the students in the various grades by using specific district guidelines.

Over the course of their education, ELLs may attend a variety of bilingual programs that have different scopes and designs. Differences may occur within and across schools in the same district. If the student comes from a migrant family, changes in programs may be even more frequent. Thus, the variety of bilingual programs may be a source of confusion for those ELLs who are at risk or demonstrate a language-learning impairment. In addition, the variations in the instructional strategies used by general and special education professionals may influence the learning of ELLs negatively.

Instructional strategies. August and Hakuta (1998) identified several characteristics of instruction used with ELLs in successful programs. Many of these teaching strategies are useful for students of any cultural and linguistic background. For example, successful instructional strategies incorporate a balanced approach in using various techniques to teach reading, including teaching of phonics as well as teaching of meaning and comprehension (Gersten, Marks, Keating, & Baker, 1998; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Saunders et al., 1998). They also incorporate systematic assessment of students to determine the need for programmatic changes or adjustments (Carter & Chatfield, 1986; Slavin & Yampolsky, 1992).

Other preferred teaching strategies are specifically targeted at English-language learners. As an example, an optimal strategy when working with ELLs is to provide opportunities to practice English and to converse with native speakers of

the English language (Berman et al., 1995; Saunders et al.,1998; Tikunoff et al., 1991). There should also be opportunities for the students to express themselves orally and in written form with the teacher and other students in both languages (Gersten et al., 1998; Goldenberg, 1992–1993; Saunders et al., 1998). Longitudinal studies have indicated that students acquire high proficiency in their native language and English if the programs are structured to promote bilingualism (Berman et al., 1995; Calderón, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1996; Ramírez, Yuen, Ramey, & Pasta, 1991). However, there has been no specific research addressing the effects on instruction of teachers' and school administrators' abilities to speak another language. August and Hakuta (1998) noted that "the studies reviewed can at best, make an oblique contribution to the debate on the role of home language and culture on education of these students. In part this is because there are no rigorous studies that have controlled for interactions among student background (e.g., prior school in the native language, age), ways in which the first and second languages are used and other instructional variables (e.g., overall quality of schooling)" (p. 79).

The quality of instruction depends on use of appropriate instructional strategies. Some of these strategies include (a) facilitating students' comprehension and participation in academic learning, (b) structuring activities that promote students' active use of the second language, and (c) allowing students to use their native language as a scaffold for English language and concept development (Gersten et al., 1998; Tikunoff et al., 1991). However, further research is needed to determine which attributes and which combinations of attributes are most effective in enhancing ELL learning (August & Hakuta, 1998). Additional information is needed to apply these same principles in the application of interventions for ELLs who have language-learning impairments.

Contextual Factors Affecting Language Use

Two types of language proficiency, defined originally by Cummins (1984), have been discussed extensively in the literature of second language and literacy development. The first type, referred to as *basic interpersonal communication skills* or *BICS*, relates to communication skills used in informal situations or in contextually based situations. The second, *cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)*, refers to communication skills used in situations that involve more decontextualized language for acquiring new information and constructing knowledge, such as would take place in the classroom. In the classroom, ELLs participate in discussions about newly taught and more abstract topics. While BICS for a second language are generally acquired within 2 years, it may take an ELL from 5 to 7 years to reach a similar level of CALP on academic tasks as compared to native English speakers (Cummins, 1984).

In addition, the transfer of knowledge across languages may be attained more easily in certain academic areas than in others, depending on the language demands of the activity involved. Specific levels and types of language knowledge may be required to attain success in a given subject. Nevertheless, there is still uncertainty about what type of language proficiency is necessary to succeed in a given subject or domain because, to date, research in this area has been limited. In practice, educators often assume that students are ready to benefit from instruction in any subject area because they can communicate in English when, in reality, the students need to acquire additional language skills or metalinguistic strategies to learn more complex subject matter.

Cummins' concepts of language proficiency are supported by the recent work of Ruíz (1995a, 1995b). In her evaluation of the communication skills of ELLs with language-learning disabilities, Ruíz identified specific classroom events that enhanced the students' language and literacy abilities, thus enabling professionals to witness the students' language competencies that otherwise may not have been apparent. Those events included (a) an emphasis on communication content rather than on language form; (b) implementation of lessons in which students were encouraged to initiate topics, such as during sociodramatic play; and (c) situations that elicited and promoted the students' experiences and background knowledge

rather than using prepackaged curricular materials. Ruíz's findings may represent Cummins' concepts of BICS and CALP. That is, ELLs may have demonstrated higher-level language competencies in situations that were more contextualized. However, when the task required a level of language similar to CALP, they demonstrated less sophisticated or mature language skills. Thus, gathering information on the type of language required by the teacher or of the activity and evaluating the students' responses to these demands are important to gain a more accurate picture of the student's language and communication skills.

In summary, as ELLs are assessed for their language and literacy skills, it is important to consider how these factors may affect their communication and learning abilities in the classroom and possible discrepancies that may appear. Specifically, even when the literacy skills of ELLs are below expectations, there may be differences in the level of ability between the two languages. These students may be more literate in their less proficient language because of greater exposure to print in that language, given the lack of exposure to print in their primary language in the home or school environments. Likewise, switching languages during instruction or implementing inadequate teaching strategies might pose serious problems for some ELLs. Special education professionals will need to keep in mind that some students may demonstrate the ability to communicate adequately in the second language in contextually based situations but may have difficulty sustaining a conversation or interacting in the classroom when opinions need to be defended or different points of view need to be considered. Therefore, when assessing an ELL with a suspected language-learning impairment, it is important to collect as much information as possible about the factors that contribute to successful communication and learning in the English-language classroom.

The case illustration that follows highlights the factors discussed earlier as they were examined during a language and literacy evaluation of the communication skills of an ELL. It also provides suggestions for how special educators, speech and language pathologists, resource specialists, and/or psychologists might take these factors into account when planning intervention strategies for ELLs.

Roberto: A Case Illustration

Roberto is an 11-year-old bilingual Spanish/English-speaking student who has been enrolled in bilingual classes during all of his schooling and has been exposed to both Spanish and English during most of his life at home. Although he is bilingual, he has not acquired all language competencies required to be considered fully proficient in English. Roberto has received services in speech and language since the middle of his kindergarten year, following a formal language evaluation that included administration of normed reference tests, analysis of a language sample, observations, and feedback provided by parents and staff. The assessment was conducted by a credentialed bilingual Spanish/English-speaking speech and language pathologist. Support from the special education teacher's program for reading and writing has been provided since the middle of fifth grade. This case study covers the assessment and intervention plan for Roberto as he was being transitioned to the sixth grade.

Results of a recent bilingual psychoeducational assessment indicated that Roberto's cognitive skills were within the average range. Despite services received across the 6-year period and his average intellectual ability, he was not ready to transition into middle school without support from special education. His language proficiency and academic performance lagged in both Spanish and English when compared to other students who attended the same elementary school program. His performance on a curriculum-based assessment supplemented by formal testing revealed deficits in reading, writing, and spelling as well as in the ability to use more complex language forms in both languages. Difficulties with short-term memory skills and word finding were noted in Spanish and English. Roberto's reading and writing skills were similar in both languages and were at the second-grade level. As the evaluation progressed, it became apparent that some of the factors that influence language use and learning in the classroom negatively affected his communica-

tion skills. These factors are highlighted in the next few sections.

Home and School Environment

Initially, information was collected about Roberto's home and school environments. Roberto was born in the United States, the youngest of three siblings in an intact family. His parents were originally from one of the states neighboring Mexico City, and they emigrated to the United States about 20 years ago. Both parents worked as assemblers for one of the local computer companies. They had completed about four grades of elementary school in Mexico. Their oral proficiency in English was limited, although they could understand English quite well. Roberto's parents' profile was similar to that of most parents from the same neighborhood school. As many as 75% of these parents had 6 years or less formal schooling, and only about 30% had sufficient oral proficiency in English to carry on a dialog in English with a teacher.

Roberto communicated with the adults in his family (except for his parents) in both languages, but he continued to interact mostly in Spanish with his parents and two preschool-age nieces. Even though he was reportedly a quiet child and spoke little during his preschool years, his parents were not overly concerned about his limited early verbal communication skills. They felt that once he started kindergarten he would become more verbal.

Across the 6-year period preceding his transition to middle school, communication between Roberto's parents and the school had been limited. During the fourth and fifth grades, however, bimonthly communications occurred between Roberto's parents and the speech and language pathologist via notes about what had been accomplished during the speech/language sessions. Lack of time prevented the general and special education professionals from having more direct contact with his family. However, during the fourth and fifth grades, the parents were specifically requested to help Roberto by monitoring his homework assignments and to engage him in reading to them in Spanish. They agreed to follow up with the tasks. Due to a lack of records, it was unclear how Roberto's home environment had helped or hindered his transition into the school system during the kindergarten year. However, the initial report indicated that the parents agreed that Roberto's language skills were not improving and consented to the initial assessment and individualized education program (IEP), which was signed in the middle of his kindergarten year.

Review and integration of the home and school environmental factors that may have impacted Roberto's language and academic performance across the elementary years led to two hypotheses. First, it appeared that his parents had not participated spontaneously in his schoolwork but were willing to help when specifically asked. This suggested a level of support for his learning that may only have required prompting on the part of the school professionals. It is possible, as suggested in the review of the literature, that Roberto's parents felt inadequately prepared to help him with homework even though it may have been assigned in Spanish. Second, it appeared that the parents did not originally have high expectations for Roberto's language and, possibly, literacy skills, given that they assumed he would develop better language skills when he enrolled in school. The fact that they consented to the initial assessment and program when Roberto enrolled in school indicated that they relied on the school personnel to facilitate Roberto's language development without the need of their direct participation at home.

School Philosophy

Roberto had attended "San Juan School" since kindergarten. This program is designated as a bilingual transitional program. A majority of the children who attend San Juan School come from Hispanic backgrounds (80%). About 10% come from Asian and South Asian backgrounds. The remainder of the school population is comprised of equal numbers of African American and White children. There is a frequent transition of students across schools within the district, as well as between neighboring districts, although Roberto was not moved within the system.

San Juan School is a kindergarten through fifth grade school. Nearly all students begin their instruction in Spanish due to the large Hispanic population. In this school, English is introduced for about 10% of the day in the kindergarten. The percentage is increased to about 20% in the first grade and incrementally thereafter until it reaches 70% by the fifth grade. It is expected that the students' English language proficiency will be reclassified from LEP in the early grades to fluent English speaking (FEP) by fifth grade.

Throughout the various grades, Spanish and English instruction is offered by two different teachers, with only one providing instruction in one language at a time. Upon completion of fifth grade, students transfer to a middle school program (sixth to eighth grades). At that time, they are expected to perform successfully in academic areas in both Spanish and English. However, the transition is difficult for many of the students at San Juan School, despite implementation of instructional strategies that appear to be of the type that have been reported to be most successful for bilingual education. A review of factors that represented the school philosophy resulted in mixed findings.

The school was engaged in activities that promoted appreciation for the linguistic and cultural background of the children by celebrating various holidays and inviting successful persons from the community who have attended schools in the district. There appeared to be strong educational leadership; the principal and vice principal were respected, and there was an ongoing dialogue between them and the teachers. However, communication among staff members about Roberto did not appear to occur routinely until about the fourth grade, when consultation between the classroom teacher and speech and language pathologist was initiated on a bimonthly basis.

Surprisingly, it was not until the fourth grade that Roberto was referred for cognitive and literacy assessment when the speech and language pathologist noted literacy problems during her sessions with him. At that time, his classroom teacher indicated that, although Roberto was in the lowest reading group in Spanish and English, he was not exceedingly behind many of the other students in the class. This seemed to indicate lower expectations for Roberto's academic skills on the part of the classroom teacher. A review of his previous report cards supported this hypothesis. They indicated passing, but very low, grades in all academic subjects, mostly C– and D. Unfortunately, there were no specific teachers' comments noted in his cumulative record, and there was no mention of a need for additional resources other than speech and language services.

Thus, while the school appeared to be strong in following desired practices in educating bilingual students, several factors suggested the opposite. The lower expectations for Roberto may have been due to a misunderstanding of the nature of language differences versus disorders. There may also have been a misconception that some services (i.e., speech and language services) were sufficient to facilitate his development in all academic areas.

Instructional Strategies

Some of the positive strategies implemented by the teachers, as determined through observations and self-reports, included native language instruction and utilization of effective techniques to enhance comprehension. Strategies included the use of scaffolding for learning new information, providing explanations about what the students would be doing, and eliciting the students' prior knowledge. However, through careful observations, it became apparent that successful teaching strategies were not always implemented consistently. For example, during his fifth-grade year, Roberto received special instruction in a small-group setting for 30 minutes daily to develop and strengthen reading decoding, comprehension, and writing skills. This so-called trial intervention was implemented as part of an assessment process for possible literacy impairments. The primary teaching strategy was to link the content in Roberto's individual lessons to the content of his subjects taught in the general education classroom. The bilingual resource specialist indicated, however, that while she used a balanced approach to reading instruction that included a combination of a phonics approach and activities to enhance com-

prehension, she was unable to follow the same curricular themes that were discussed in the classroom due to a lack of time and resources.

Many students are not performing at their grade level once they leave San Juan School. This is especially true for students like Roberto who have language-learning impairments. Conversations with faculty at San Juan School revealed several possible reasons for academic delays in students with special needs. Among them were (a) a lack of agreement among teachers about their philosophy regarding best practices for instruction in Spanish and English; (b) frequent changes among staff members; (c) a limited number of native English-speaking peers; (d) low expectations on the part of some teachers; (e) a lack of parent participation; and (f) inadequate school readiness for incoming kindergartners. Thus, many of the elements discussed earlier in this article as being important components of a successful learning climate for ELLs were lacking at San Juan School. It is not surprising, then, that ELLs were not performing at grade level academically in a second language (English) after 5 or 6 years of schooling. While on the surface the staff had adopted many of the school philosophies and used instructional strategies shown to be beneficial for bilingual education, closer examination revealed that these were not always implemented. The inconsistencies in school philosophy and instructional strategies were assumed to be especially detrimental for Roberto and other ELLs with language-learning impairments.

Contextual Effects on Learning

A review of Roberto's background records for speech and language services suggested some positive changes in his communication strengths and weaknesses across time as well as across classroom tasks. Roberto was originally seen for speech and language services in kindergarten due to delays in expressive speech and language development in Spanish, his dominant language at the time. Over a 5-year period, improvements were noted in his communication skills in Spanish, yet not all goals for successful language communication were met during any given 1-year time span, and therefore Roberto was not dismissed from the speech and language program. Goals for intervention changed over this period, and the speech and language objectives included improving pragmatic skills, narrative skills, and problem-solving and verbal-reasoning skills. These goals may have been set due to the changing demands of the classroom. However, no information was available regarding the intervention strategies that had been used to assist Roberto in gaining more successful communication skills in both Spanish and English. There were also no indications of how the changing goals for language intervention met the requirements of classroom activities or subjects.

Observations of Roberto in the fifth-grade classroom revealed strengths and weaknesses, consistent with the concepts of BICS and CALP. When Roberto was observed in the classroom, he was inattentive when he had to listen to more complex directions or to presentations by his peers (e.g., listening to science projects completed by fellow students). However, through observations in less structured settings, it appeared that Roberto had reached an adequate level of basic communication skills in both the Spanish and the English languages. Roberto could express his ideas and relate concrete daily situations with equal ease in both languages.

When Roberto had an opportunity to become familiar with a given topic, his reading and oral language comprehension often improved. This was apparent both for the more informal classroom activities and in some social situations. For example, Roberto could describe the meaning of independence in greater detail by providing specific examples once the topic had been discussed in relation to Mexico's and America's independence wars. This topic had been supported with dialog between teacher and students and by using films and picture books. Roberto was also able to apply the concept to provide everyday examples that referred to the term.

However, in other classroom activities, Roberto demonstrated less mature language skills. For example, he lacked ability to express his thoughts effectively when he needed to provide more detailed explanations, had to defend a point of view, or had to interpret a given situation. On

various occasions, his explanations remained very concrete, and he used gestures to supplement his comments. Roberto's facility with oral language was also diminished somewhat on narrative tasks. On those tasks there were multiple examples of word-finding difficulties, and he was unable to express his thoughts fluently. Finally, Roberto expressed himself in more complex sentences in Spanish than in English. This may have occurred because the English-language instruction he received was provided in contexts that contained less context-based support. Thus, it appeared that when classroom activities required a language proficiency level of CALP, Roberto was unable to meet those demands.

Although the factors reviewed here most likely did not cause Roberto's communication difficulties, it seems likely that they may have helped maintain them as he moved through the elementary school years. Knowing these factors, and the possible negative effects they could have on students like Roberto, several recommendations for intervention were made to address them.

Future Plans for Roberto's Special Education Services

During the latest IEP conference, held at the end of the previous school year, the special education professional team recommended placement in a special day-class setting with bilingual language instruction. It was felt that the small instructional group size would allow Roberto to benefit from more teacher contact. Goals were written to increase his reading comprehension by using texts at his comfortable reading level and by incorporating themes that were discussed in social studies and science. This allowed him to review the same material in different contexts. Other goals included (a) increasing his phonemic awareness skills; (b) developing strategies for producing written text; (c) enhancing his ability to respond verbally to questions about a given text and describe a given event with greater detail; (d) offering his point of view; and (e) predicting and hypothesizing by using material from literature, science, and social studies. In addition, recommendations were made to address some of the factors that appeared to have had a negative impact on the development of his communication skills and the delivery of services.

In the home environment, Roberto's parents were encouraged to monitor his homework and to ensure that a family member or friend assisted him with assignments when necessary. Furthermore, suggestions were offered on how to foster his Spanish-language skills and conceptual understanding by discussing the news or any show they might all see on television. In addition, his parents were counseled to consult with teachers when they had any concerns. They were encouraged to offer opportunities for Roberto to visit and invite friends home to strengthen his relationship with peers. The case manager agreed to contact a Spanish-speaking counselor who would communicate with Roberto's parents regularly to strengthen the home–school connection.

It was expected that there would be continued support of different cultures in the middle school as well as strong leadership from the principal. The resource specialist suggested providing some of Roberto's interventions in Spanish as well because his exposure to the language for formal instruction had not been sufficient. To strengthen Roberto's English by providing richer contextual cues, the team recommended that he participate in various academically based situations with native speakers of English to increase his communication skills in that language. The team suggested that Roberto work with a fluent English speaker to complete some science and social studies projects that would mirror requirements from the general education program within his special education class. In this manner Roberto would have an opportunity to interact orally and in writing with a peer whose language proficiency in English was higher than his. At the same time, Roberto could participate in that student's science or social studies with increments of time based on his progress. Despite Roberto's language and learning difficulties, the team recommended that realistic, but high, expectations be maintained regarding his achievement. Other recommendations included careful monitoring of his progress by documenting improvement in his language and academic performance to make any necessary programmatic adjustments.

Thus, Roberto could slowly be included in some classes in the school's general program. Because Spanish was offered as a foreign language at the middle school, the team advised that Roberto be included in the beginning Spanish class, where he could be the teacher's helper and might assist with modeling language and at the same time receive credit. In this way, he was given an opportunity to increase his skills in English at a more conversational level as he helped tutor students in Spanish. Table 2 provides a summary IEP for Roberto.

Discussion

Hindsight is 20/20. Although Roberto probably would have presented with a language-learning impairment in the most optimal of situations, his history during the elementary school years revealed several factors that may have contributed to or maintained some of his language-learning impairments. As previously reported, children who come from culturally or linguistically different homes may have had varying experiences with strategies to prepare them for school. This preparation consists of providing exposure to print and to conversations about events, as well as discussions about printed material and more detailed verbalization of actions and ongoing activities. Most children learn new and more advanced ways to use language with greater exposure to schooling. However, perhaps because of his initial speech and language problems, Roberto seemed unable to learn new ways to use language as effectively and as rapidly as his peers. It also may have been that his parents trusted the school, and thus did not challenge his lack of academic progress.

The possible factors that could affect Roberto's communication development were the school philosophy and instructional strategies. Roberto attended a school where there was a philosophy of providing dual language instruction, but this was not interpreted in the same way by all faculty. As mentioned previously, some of the teachers at San Juan School may have had low expectations of their students. Many teachers were new to the teaching field and were ill prepared to teach ELLs, making effective and consistent implementation difficult.

Finally, Roberto demonstrated basic skills in communication in both languages' BICS, but he did not have sufficient language skills to ensure greater success in the academic areas of CALP. Awareness of the differences in these language proficiency profiles, as well as of the classroom contexts in which they are best utilized, may have enabled professionals to help him capitalize on his strengths while attempting to remediate his weaknesses.

The future for Roberto is a puzzle. Hopefully, the pieces will begin to fall in place so that he can develop English language and literacy skills to a greater degree. Roberto's language and literacy impairments were similar to those of monolingual students with language-learning impairment, but his problems were reflected in two languages. Given this variable and the factors that impact uniquely on ELLs with language-learning impairments, it is imperative that speech and language pathologists, in collaboration with all general and special education professionals, identify factors that could negatively impact the language use and learning of ELLs. By addressing and changing these factors and attempting to put policies and procedures into place that address them before or as ELLs enter the school system, schools may help students like Roberto earlier. When the school staff involves the family more, agrees to use best practices for the school's philosophy and instructional strategies, and capitalizes on the contexts in which children can show their communication strengths, the puzzle might become less complicated for both professionals and students.

It is difficult to speculate what might have happened if Roberto spoke a language other than Spanish for which there might not be a bilingual program. It is likely that his progress would have been even slower and the communication with his family much more difficult. However, Roberto's case illustrates the importance of considering all of the factors mentioned in this article as contributing to the success of students for whom English is a second language.

TABLE 2

SAMPLE IEP FOR ROBERTO

Summary: Roberto —CA: 11 years

COGNITIVE ABILITY and PROCESSING SKILLS: Overall cognitive skills indicate average ability on all tasks that require general comprehension, knowledge, and nonverbal reasoning skills as well as tasks that include visual processing. Weaker areas include auditory processing and auditory-short-term memory skills.

ACADEMIC SKILLS: Reading—decoding of words, comprehension, and writing using a combination of formal and informal measures are at the third-grade level in Spanish and second-grade level in English. Math skills, which include general computations, time concepts, money values, and word problems, are estimated to be between the third- and fourth-grade levels.

HEALTH: Roberto passed both the vision and hearing screenings. No significant health-related or developmental problems were present.

SPEECH/COMMUNICATION: Roberto has fairly good BICS skills in both languages, but he has not attained sufficiently strong language skills to facilitate and process academically related subjects (CALP) in either language. He has difficulty pronouncing and decoding more complex multisyllabic words in both languages. When he reads, he does not use alternative strategies to predict what word might supplement what he reads. This difficulty is also evident in his speech when he tries to explain something using his own words.

Goals and Objectives: Roberto will demonstrate improvement in the following areas in both Spanish and English:

READING SKILLS:

Goal: Roberto will read texts at the third- to fourth-grade level on a variety of topics in the areas of literature, social studies, and science and will demonstrate his comprehension by:

(a) Summarizing the content of the selection by providing a narrative of the main idea in three or more connected sentences.

(b) Comparing and contrasting the content of text with his knowledge/experience with the topic.

(c) Defining and using key words extracted from the text.

WRITING SKILLS:

Goal: Roberto's writing skills will improve by at least 1 year as measured by informal and formal assessment tools. Topics will include personal experiences as well as learned material in the classroom:

(a) Roberto will write a short 25- to 30-word summary of a selection that he has read answering *wh*-type questions specified by the teacher.

(b) Roberto will write a five- to six-sentence paragraph composition, which will include a topic sentence followed by four sentences that support the initial statement and a summary sentence that answers the topic of his composition.

continues

TABLE 2 - Continued

LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION:

Goal: Roberto will develop his language and communication skills in both Spanish and English.

(a) After hearing a summary of a given issue or problem, Roberto will provide a logical prediction of the outcome and support his statement.

(b) After reading a short passage of a reading selection, Roberto will provide a summary of what he has read.

(c) Roberto will explain directions for a science or social studies project using his own words.

PROGRAM: Roberto will be instructed in a small group (no more than 15 students) for at least four of the periods in the day. He will participate in the general physical education program and in one elective (Spanish).

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author wishes to thank several individuals who contributed to the improvement of this manuscript over time. They include: Ken Apel, Bonnie Brinton, Lucy Ghelfi, Elise Trumbull, and Elisabeth Wiig for their valuable comments and editing suggestions.

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EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES

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ABSTRACT

Reform and accountability are imperative for programmatic changes in general and special education. Understandably, any form of reform matters to students, parents, and other educational stakeholders. However, the question is not whether special education is a necessity; the questions continue to be, How "special" is special education for African American learners? Why are these learners consistently misidentified, misassessed, miscategorized, misplaced, and misinstructed? And, what can general and special educators do about these problems? In this article, we respond to these critical questions and suggest ways for making reform accountable for African American learners.

Every child can learn. Every school can ensure the success of every child. Statements to this effect appear in goals statements, curriculum reports, and school district offices. They are posted in school buildings and appear as mottoes on school stationery. But does our education system behave as if they are true? If we truly believed that every child could learn under proper circumstances, we would be relentless in the search of those circumstances. We would use well-validated instructional methods and materials known to be capable of ensuring the success of nearly all children if used with intelligence, flexibility, and fidelity. We would involve teachers in constant, collaborative professional development activities to continually improve their abilities to reach every child. We would frequently assess children's performance to be sure that all students are on a path that leads to success and to be able to respond immediately if children are not making adequate progress. If children [were] falling behind despite excellent instruction, we would try different instructional approaches, and, if necessary, we would provide them with tutors or other intensive assistance. We would involve parents in support of their children's school success; we would check to see whether vision, hearing, health, nutrition, or other nonacademic problems were holding children back, and then we would find a solution to those problems. If we truly believed that all children could learn, we would rarely, if ever, assign children to special education or long-term remedial programs that in effect lower expectations for children. If we truly believed that all schools could ensure the success of all children, then the failure of even a single child would be cause for great alarm and immediate,

forceful intervention. (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996, p. xi)

These issues raised by Slavin and colleagues indicate the failure of general and special educators to address educational problems confronting today's children and youths, especially those who are at risk of school failure. Interestingly, every new day brings new reform or accountability programs, yet *the more things change, the more they remain the same.* Earlier, Cuban (1984, 1990) and Kauffman, Kameenui, Birman, and Danielson (1990) noted that educators have fallen prey to the kind of "hard-sell" mentality that often accompanies reform movements. According to Kauffman and colleagues, there is a constant search for easy solutions, rather than "hard thinking that brings about advances in theory, application, and practice" (p. 114).

For African American learners, the question has been simple and consistent—that is, how can we provide equitable educational programs that help them to maximize their fullest potential? However, the responses have been inconsistent, disingenuous, and sometimes racist. Today, while the reform rhetoric continues, too many African American learners continue to be misidentified, misassessed, miscategorized, misplaced, and misinstructed (Obiakor, 2001). One is left to wonder whether we are really interested in solving these problems or we are interested only in the politics of the problems. In this article, we examine historical and current special education contexts as they affect school accountability and reform programs for African American learners. In addition, we prescribe ways to create successful learning environments for African American children and youths with exceptionalities.

Lessons From History: Deferred Dreams

Historically, the struggle for equality has been at the forefront of the concerns of most African Americans in the United States. Although there are pockets of restructuring and reform programs that have buttressed the academic success of African American learners, the underlying principle of equitable educational programming for these learners remains a problem. Consider the endemic predicaments confronting them in school programs. First, standardized instruments are consistently used to misjudge their intelligence or place them in restrictive special education programs (Hilliard, 1992, 1995; Obiakor, Algozzine, & Ford, 1994). Second, teacher expectations of them are frequently inaccurate and negative (Obiakor, 1999, 2000, 2001). Third, they are consistently perceived to have a low or negative self-concept or self-worth (Obiakor, 1992, 1999). Fourth, they continue to lack realistic role models who understand their history, symbols, cultural values, and learning styles in school programs (Harvey & Scott-Jones, 1985; Ogbu, 1990). And fifth, schools in their neighborhoods are still viewed as "bad" or "poor" schools (Obiakor, 2001).

While the multidimensional problems just mentioned continue to manifest themselves in general and special education programs for African Americans, efforts to address them have been culturally unidimensional and ill conceived. For instance, school reform programs have continued to place more emphasis on excellence through high-stakes testing and less emphasis on common sense or practical perspectives that work. This quest for higher test scores legitimizes the monocultural mentality that landmark court actions (e.g., *Brown v. State Board of Education,* 1954) have sought to combat.

As Corder and Quisenberry (1987) concluded, "during the first half of the 20th century, courts were kept busy deciding the constitutionality of educational issues in regard to Black Americans" (p. 156). Earlier, Staples (1984) decried the plight of African Americans in school programs. He noted that "the ideology of equal opportunity masks the reality of a country stratified along racial, gender, and class lines" (p. 12). He also became saddened by what he called the *new racism,* which (a) tends to deny the existence of racism or the responsibility for it, (b) defends phony meritocracy, and (c) relies on standardized tests that are not valid predictors of quality performance. A few years later, Jackson (1988) focused on the entrenched problems that are correlates of overrepresentation and underrepresenta-

tion of African Americans in special and gifted programs, respectively. They are:

1. Loss of teaching and administrative jobs by Blacks through dismissals, demotions, or displacement.
2. Loss of racial models, heroes, and authority figures for Black children.
3. Loss of cherished school symbols, programs, and names of schools by Black children when their schools were closed and they were shifted to White schools.
4. Subjection to segregated classes and buses, and exclusion from extracurricular activities.
5. Suspension and expulsion of disproportionate numbers of Black students.
6. Exposure of Black children to hostile attitudes and behavior of White teachers and parents.
7. Victimization by forced one-way busing policies and the uprooting of Black children for placement in hostile school environments.
8. Victimization by misclassification in special education classes tracking systems.
9. Victimization by unfair discipline practices and arbitrary school rules and regulations.
10. Victimization by ignorance of Black children's learning styles and cultural, social, educational, and psychological needs. (p. 445)

The aforementioned problems have put an added pressure on school accountability and reform programs for African American learners. It is imperative that reformers acknowledge these traditional problems before initiating change policies. We cannot talk about equal education for all when in reality our traditional educational programs foster historical inequities. We must continue to ask: What reform and restructuring lessons have been learned from history? What efforts must be made to design programs that foster *quality* and *equity?* How can general educators understand the relationship between what they do and what happens to students in special education? For African American learners, these questions must be answered to initiate and design equitable and high-quality programs at all educational levels.

How "Special" Is Special Education for African American Learners?

Special education was intended to be individualized and tailor made for each child with a special need. In 1975, Public Law 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) ensured that all children, despite their disability, would have the right to enter into the public education system and receive a free and appropriate education. For more than 7 years, only the letter, not the spirit, of this legislation has been carried out by many general and special educators. As a result, many scholars (e.g., Daniels, 1998; Russo & Talbert-Johnson, 1997) have questioned whether or not this was a form of resegregation under the guise of educational reform. Interestingly, special education was intended to buttress general education (Shapiro et al., 1993), and on the surface it seemed to have great face validity. For example, consider that special education laws required (a) special education classrooms to maintain a lower teacher-to-pupil ratio than general education classrooms, (b) special expenditures that are two to four times higher than those of general education, (c) specially tailored programs designed specifically for the child, and (d) special services to be delivered by well-prepared teachers (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998).

For more than four decades, the judicial system has been involved in the arena of special education because of such unbalanced representation. Many landmark cases have demonstrated the unethical use of standardized measures in schools to place African American children into special education. The courts ruled in the above cases that IQ tests alone were not valid for placing children into inferior special education classrooms. In the *Larry P.* case (Larry P. v. Riles, 1972) Judge Peckham ruled that IQ tests alone were not valid for placing children into inferior special education

classrooms. As a result, he put a moratorium on intelligence tests for Black children in the the state of California. This case brought national attention to this issue. As MacMillan and Reschly (1998) stated, the outcry of the people was not merely because African Americans were disproportionately represented in special education classes, but because they were also put in classes that were stigmatizing, degrading, and less effective than their previous general education classes.

Apparently, the current selection process for special education has been labeled as inadequate, misleading, unethical, and dangerous (Obiakor & Johnson, 1997). The use of controversial methods (e.g., IQ tests) has been debated in courts over the past four decades. Sadly, these inadequate assessments and discriminatory tests are still employed with great regularity (Obiakor, Harris-Obiakor, Obi, & Eskay, 2000; Ysseldyke & Marston, 1999). It is no wonder that the disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education programs has attracted national attention (Obiakor & Utley, 2001; Patton, 1998). To effectively analyze how "special" special education has been for African American learners and fully create successful learning environments for those with exceptionalities, the intricate steps of special education (i.e., identification, assessment, categorization, placement, instruction) must be briefly examined.

Identification

As early as the 1960s and 1970s, many concerned scholars and educators warned that special education would be disserving to certain students, and the manifestation of this prophecy still holds true in this new millennium for many students from diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds (Grossman, 1998). The identification of a student sets the stage for further legally mandated activities not routinely addressed in general education classrooms. Once a child has been identified as having an educational disability, the law (e.g., the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or its reauthorization in 1997) mandates that teachers employ several interventions before the next phase (i.e., testing) is set in motion. In a recent study, Sbarra and Pianta (2001) reported that kindergarten and first-grade teachers differ in perception of competence behaviors between African American and Caucasian students. Furthermore, they observed that the differences expressed were based on the cultural biases of the teachers. Parents trust and rely on certified educators to detect various disabilities; however, some teachers play on the subjective nature of the current system and abuse this initial referral protocol as a means of selectively getting rid of students they deem as incorrigible (Obiakor, 1999; Obiakor et al., 2002).

Grossman (1998) acknowledged that most educators do not believe they are biased against those outside the mainstream society. These educators tend to forget that schools are a microcosm of the larger society. He further noted that people see what they expect to see and that the propaganda of the media has vilified those outside the mainstream culture. As a consequence, teachers judge ethnic minority and low-income students' behaviors as more deviant than those of Anglo American children, even when they are exactly the same. In the same vein, these teachers are more likely to bequeath praise and congratulatory remarks and attentiveness to Anglo American students (see Grossman; New, 1996; Obiakor, 2001; Sbarra & Pianta, 2001; Utley & Obiakor, 2001). Frequently, inappropriate identification is followed by inappropriate assessment, another injustice (Obiakor, 2001; Obiakor et al., 2002).

Assessment

Educators have continued to use outdated materials and assessment instruments despite the decisions of the courts, outcry from parents, and failing schools. The current assessment procedure is based on a myopic strategy (Boykin, 2000), a "one-size-fits-all" paradigm (Obiakor et al., 2000) despite the great heterogeneity inside and outside schools. An assessment measure is designed to present valuable information to the specialist to determine the needs of the child; however, assessment tools used in special education cases are designed to produce scores used to determine eligibility (Obiakor et al., 2002).

The irony of the process is that many creators of these same instruments (e.g., Alfred Binet) warned that a single number could not describe an individual's intelligence and could produce a brutal pessimism (Kwate, 2001; Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 2001). For instance, Kwate stated that IQ scores are inherently meaningless and misleading and have outlived the usefulness they once had. Moreover, these assessments cannot assess an African American child's giftedness, and thus, they do serious harm to the child. Scholars (Allen & Graden, 1995; Obiakor et al., 2002; Ysseldyke & Marston, 1999) have suggested that schools approach assessment from a developmental perspective, not from a deficit perspective. In a search for pathology, educators and psychometricians spend more time assessing students (e.g., African American children) to declare them eligible for categorical labels and special education placements (Gardner, 1993; Obiakor & Utley, 1997).

Categorization

There is a great deal of ambiguity regarding the criteria for categorical labeling in special education. Very often, biased teachers predict a cloud of doom for African American students who fail to conform to their individual standards. For instance, the etiology of learning disabilities (LD) is a psychological enigma. Many schools use an arbitrary IQ–achievement discrepancy—which is not empirically supported—to determine eligibility. Therefore, criteria for the same diagnosis can vary within the same city and state. Ysseldyke and Marston (1999) stated that psychometric measures could not reliably differentiate between students with LD and those who are low achievers (LA); furthermore, the LD criteria are inadequate in discriminating between students with LD and those with LA (Graden, Casey, & Christenson, 1985). This ambiguity may be found in the lack of empirical evidence to differentiate between children with mild cognitive disability and those with academic difficulties (see Ysseldyke & Marston).

In his classic book *The Futures of Children: Categories, Labels, and Their Consequences*, Nicholas Hobbs (1975) noted that words and labels are needed to classify students, but that they make victims out of students. As he pointed out:

> Categories and labels are powerful instruments for social regulation and control, and they are often employed for obscure, covert, or hurtful purposes: to degrade people, to deny their access to opportunity, to exclude "undesirables" whose presence in some way offends, disturbs familiar custom, or demands extraordinary effort. (p. 11)

Hobbs's views were later reiterated by Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Thurlow (2000) when they wrote:

> Labeling students is not a benign activity nor is it a necessary evil, as school officers and others sometimes claim. Despite a presumed need for them, labels are an unfortunate by-product of a system that attaches money to acts, thus resulting in classifications and categories. Labels are often irrelevant to the instructional needs of students. Furthermore, labels become real attributes that prevent meaningful understanding of actual individual learning needs. By causing some to believe that students labeled as having mental retardation cannot perform certain tasks, the act of classifying condemns these students to a life of lesser expectations and performance. Labels require official sanction. Resources diverted to the process of identifying and classifying students are extensive. Time and money spent on labeling are time and money not spent on teaching. Time spent being labeled is time not spent being taught or learning. (p. 110)

Placement

It has been proven that special education has a disproportionate number of students from ethnic minority groups diagnosed with various disabilities (National Research Council, 2002; Reschly & Ysseldyke, 1995; Sparks, 1999; Strickland & Ascher, 1992). Some scholars (e.g., Patton, 1998) have acknowledged that special education is structurally flawed and does not have the best interest of African American learners at heart. Between

1980 and 1990, representation in special education as a whole increased among all racial groups: European Americans increased 6%, African Americans increased 13%, Hispanic Americans increased 53%, and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders increased 107.8% (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

Earlier, Harry (1992) discovered that the national data can be misleading. For instance, it was reported that African Americans make up 16% of the general enrollment and 21% of special education enrollment. Yet, when probed deeper, it was evident that the African American population, which comprised 16% of the general school population, made up 35% of the educable mentally retarded (EMR) category, 27% of the trainable mentally retarded (TMR) category, and 27% of the seriously emotionally disturbed (SED) classification (see Harry). In addition, while some categories of exceptionalities are objective (e.g., vision, hearing, traumatic brain injury), some are not objective (e.g., learning disabilities, mental retardation), and some are even desirable (e.g., gifted and talented programs, where African American learners are unfortunately underrepresented).

It is sad to note that the laws in special education are seldom treated as mandates. Frequently, they are treated as suggestions or proposals. It is no surprise that nonachieving African American learners are placed in special education classes before academic interventions are attempted (Ford et al., 1995; Obiakor & Ford, 2002). The paradox is that the intervention for these learners has been placement into retrogressive special education classes. Obiakor (1999), Patton (1998), and Russo and Talbert-Johnson (1997) agreed that these learners are placed in educational structures that are not conducive to their academic success. In other words, African American learners are more likely to be tracked for punishment facilities, pathological labels, and subsequent placements in special education. Unfortunately, in these settings they receive stigmatizing labels, isolation from peers, and patronizing teachers. In the end, many of these students grow up to experience low rates of employment, low income, and increased rates of incarceration.

Instruction/Intervention

It is logical to assume that misidentification leads to misassessment, misassessment leads to miscategorization, miscategorization leads to misplacement, and misplacement leads to misinstruction/misintervention (Obiakor, 1994, 1999, 2001; Obiakor & Johnson, 1997). In their classic work more than three decades ago, Henderson and Bibens (1970) asked the following reform-based questions that teachers interested in being accountable to their students must address:

1. Is the teacher able to put his [her] students at ease?
2. Is the teacher's voice pleasant, or is it harsh and irritating to the listener?
3. Is the teacher positive in his [her] classroom techniques or does he [she] have a negative approach to teaching?
4. Is the teacher able to present material in an interesting and meaningful way so that he [she] holds the attention of his [her] student?
5. Is the teacher sincere with members of his [her] class?
6. Does the teacher's classroom bearing suggest that he [she] enjoys teaching, or does it appear that to him [her] teaching is just a job?
7. Does the teacher exhibit a sense of humor, or is the entire learning situation a dry and boring process?
8. Does the teacher have a real concern for all of his [her] students? Does he [she] appear to want to help each student in the learning activity?
9. Does the teacher know and understand the material he [she] teaches, or does he [she] attempt to bluff his [her] way by pretending to know more than he [she] actually does? (p. 143)

These questions are sometimes swept under the rug in many school reform quarters. There is almost a Band-aid approach to "good" teaching. Obiakor and Ford (2002) and Orlich, Harder,

Callahan, and Gibson (2001) argued that "good" teaching must incorporate

1. The school milieu.
2. A holistic view of instruction.
3. Equity as the big picture.
4. Sequencing and organizing of instruction.
5. Goals, standards, and outcomes for instruction.
6. Managing of the classroom environment.
7. The process of questioning.
8. Inquiry, teaching, and higher-level thinking.
9. Small-group discussions and cooperative learning.
10. Monitoring of student success.

Undoubtedly, the phony definition of "good" teaching or intervention has been harmful to many African American learners. The school sometimes is not viewed as a learning community where individuals from different cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds come together (Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995). As Obiakor (2001) noted, "goodness" is rarely used to define schools in African American neighborhoods, even though the majority of the teachers who teach African American learners are European Americans. Apparently, these teachers are culturally disconnected from the children they teach. This leads us to some critical questions: How can African American children and youths perform to the optimal level when they confront these negative burdens in school programming? Why are educational interventions for African American learners not effective, proactive, and innovative? Why are school reform programs for African American students political rather than realistic?

Making School Reform Accountable to African American Learners

We believe it is the responsibility of general and special educators to search beyond their five senses and delve into the realm that transcends what they think they see and what they think they know to discover the precious gifts and talents hidden inside the temples of African American learners. Apparently, some school reformers are unwilling to disrupt their equilibrium and accept the arduous task of maximizing the fullest potential of all their students, not just those they presume to be "good" students from "good" homes located in "good" neighborhoods (Obiakor, 2001). To make this happen in our demographically changing society, it is essential to have an ecological model that supports the collaboration and consultation of all entities within that society. This ecological model is the Comprehensive Support Model (CSM), which encourages collaboration of the student, family, school, community, and government in the teaching–learning process (Obiakor, 1994, 1999, 2001; Obiakor, Grant, & Dooley, 2002).

Based on the CSM, school accountability and reform must be everyone's business. It becomes imperative to inspire the student's "self" to try new things. To maximize his or her potential, the African American student must believe in himself or herself. In addition, the family must believe in the student, the school must be a least restrictive environment, the community must be creative in providing opportunities and choices, and the government must make laws and provide financial assistance that support the student. This can be particularly helpful to African Americans who have consistently endured racial discrimination, lowered expectations, and illusory generalizations in school programs. As a consequence, reform-minded scholars and educators must respond to the following critical questions:

1. How can African American learners be self-empowered and recognized as a part of the solution?
2. How can African American families be valued as equal partners in the educational programs for their children?
3. How can schools be nonrestrictive learning environments that foster multidimensional teaching–learning processes for African American students?

4. How can communities shift their paradigms to provide positive opportunities and choices for African American learners?
5. How can local, state, and federal governments protect and assist African American learners?

In this new millennium, we must make everyone accountable to the teaching–learning process of African American learners. All components of the CSM must listen to each other and communicate as they empower each other. The "blame game" must be ended to allow positive forces to collaborate, consult, and cooperate for the common good of the whole village. To make school reform programs accountable to African American learners, the whole village must be at work (Obiakor, 1994, 1996, 2001). A few years ago, the Milwaukee Catalyst (1998) reiterated the whole-village concept of accountability that highlights five essential school–community relationships, namely:

1. Effective school leadership.
2. Family-community partnerships.
3. A school environment that supports learning.
4. Effective staff development and collaboration.
5. A quality instructional program. (p. 1)

As the Milwaukee Catalyst concluded:

> Making practices like these a reality requires major changes—not only in the classroom but also in the way the entire school is run and in its ties with students, families, and the community. Making these changes allows the schools to focus their responses and attention on improving teaching, learning, and the student achievement for all children. (p. 2)

Simply put, general and special educators must do something innovative, creative, and visionary if they are going to assist African American learners with exceptionalities to survive the burdens of misidentification, misassessment, miscategorization, misplacement, and misinstruction/misintervention. School reformers can no longer afford to ignore any part of the whole village—they must begin and continue to listen to multiple voices.

Conclusion

In this article we have examined historical and current special education contexts as they affect school accountability and reform programs for African American learners. In addition, we have prescribed ways to create successful learning environments for African American children and youths with exceptionalities. We strongly agree that as individuals are different so must be the teaching–learning process. Ironically, this has not been the precedent in traditional educational programming for African American learners. It appears that we have consistently talked about responding to individual differences as we teach and interact, but very often, regarding African Americans, these differences are viewed as deficits. Our experiences tell us that educational reform programs for African Americans have failed to yield measurable dividends. We are tempted to ask the popular question, "Where's the beef?"

As it appears, the more things change for African American learners, the more they remain the same. In fact, we wonder whether general and special educators are interested in solving problems confronting African American learners or are interested only in the politics of the problems. This dangerous phenomenon leads us to ask two critical questions: How can we avoid the mistakes of the past in school accountability and reform programs for African American learners? and How can we initiate and design visionary programs?

We believe *realistic* special education programs are necessary for African American learners who truly have disabilities; however, we also believe that many of these learners do not deserve to be in such segregated programs. The reason is simple: Traditional educational programs are loaded with discriminatory practices; unrealistic expectations, disproportionate representations, and illusory conclusions. To minimize these complex problems and make reform programs accountable, we must adopt a CSM that incorpo-

rates powerful energies of the self, family, school, community, and government. In fact, the whole village must be at work if we are truly to help African American learners maximize their fullest potential. In the end, our paradigms must be shifted and our resolve must be stronger if we are to create successful learning environments for African American learners with exceptionalities.

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